

# **The splendour of forgiveness in Psalm 32**

**A dissertation  
by  
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## DECLARATION

I, Ben Celliers, now declare that the dissertation

The splendour of forgiveness in Psalm 32 reflects my own understanding and research on the above title and that all references utilised and quoted are referenced in full and appropriate acknowledgements are given.

Ben Celliers

December 2019

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To my Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ paved the way for me to write this dissertation and who supported me with the grace to do so, may You alone receive glory for every word written here.

## FOREWORD

I have fallen in love with Psalm 32 when journaling through the psalms as a teenager. The aim was to rewrite each psalm and to make notes. Psalm 32 stood out among other psalms. Aspects of Psalm 32 that came to the fore were its personal tone. The author is sincere and honest in his account of his circumstances, and the YHWH addressed him directly, by promising proximity and guidance. I do hope that the reading of this in-depth study of Psalm 32 will yield similar results in modern-day readers.

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## CHAPTER 1 – INTRODUCTION

### 1.1. Introduction

Research on the book of the *Psalter* early on needs to choose whether to study the *Psalter* as a book or to study a psalm as a literary unit. Both Flint (2013:11-34) and Vermes (2013:35-37) agree that the book of the *Psalter* is a regularly developing collection and recent studies challenge the assumption of the existence of the Hebrew *Urtext*. Berlin (2013:39) also challenges the traditional assumptions about the Davidic authorship of the *Psalter*. Psalm 32 is a psalm ‘of’ or ‘for’ David when the text alone is utilised as a guiding factor. The redactional history of Psalm 32 will be discussed in Chapter 3.4.

Psalm 32 is a Maskil<sup>1</sup>, or instruction, according to the heading. Körting (2013:56-63) studied what the way Christian and Jewish scholars understand under ‘divine inspiration’ and ‘human instruction’. In Psalm 32, this question particularly needs to be addressed, and her input about this topic will be of value. Körting critiques medieval Jewish scholars that tried to see any text as divine and said: ‘the inspired nature of the texts – their ‘divine’ content – prevents these exegetes from using unlimited exegetical freedom but leads them instead to align their reading per tradition’.

Gillingham (2013:64-82) presents a model of a ‘life-centred’ reading of the psalms, using Psalm 137 as an example. A ‘life-centred’ reading is equally interesting for Psalm 32, and the results of her study may yield significant results for Psalm 32 as well. To summarise Gillingham’s ‘life-centred’ approach to the reading of a psalm: It is when neither a Davidic approach nor a Christ-centred approach does justice to the meaning of a psalm. When this happens, one needs to look further than contexts and find the meaning of the psalm that is true in life. For Psalm 32, a ‘life-centred’ approach would yield meaning about life, example: ‘the splendour of forgiveness in Psalm 32 is that God administers forgiveness, and the joy of our newfound forgiveness brings healing to our situations.’ This statement can be true in any religious context, as the ‘way to forgiveness’ differs in all religions, religions might agree to what the effect of forgiveness is.

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<sup>1</sup> Weiser (1975:280-281) declares “Maskil” as a “specific type of hymn.”



Snyman (2004:155) notes that Psalm 32 has a rich history. Firstly, it was one of Augustine's favourite Psalms. Secondly, Luther called the psalm a Pauline Psalm (along with 51, 130, and 143). Thirdly, Psalm 32 is the second of the seven penitential Psalms of the early church. Johnson (2013:211) notes that 'the poetry of the Psalms has abroad simplicity of rhythm and imagery which survives transplanting into almost any soil.'

Brown (2014:1-23) wrote an article entitled: 'The Psalms: An Overview'. The article starts by saying: 'the *Psalter* features various *genres* and rich diversity of perspectives. The book of Psalms strikes nearly every theological chord that resounds throughout the Hebrew Scriptures, from covenant and history to creation and wisdom.'

Some scholars highlight forgiveness as one of the intents of Psalm 32. Longman and Enns (2008:932) notes that Psalm 32 is one of the psalms that encourages worship. Worship is encouraged due to the deliverance of sin received from YHWH and thus points towards forgiveness as an intent of Psalm 32. If this is correct, another question arises about the first audience's understanding of forgiveness. Does research into Psalm 32 add nuance to the knowledge of the splendour of forgiveness? The nuance added will be determined by evidence gained from research into the psalm.

## **1.2. Problem setting**

The text of Psalm 32 does not explain its *Sitz im Leben*. There are no footnotes of the original psalmist that tells the reader what the use of the psalm should be. Moreover, even if there was a footnote, the psalmist could not know the extent of the psalm he/she/they have written. Considering the research done on Psalm 32, there is evidence that shows Psalm 32 to have forgiveness as a central theme. The problem of the *Sitz im Leben* of Psalm 32, using forgiveness as the theme of the psalm, will be addressed in this study.

Forgiveness is a rich topic. The understanding of forgiveness determines how people see their relationship with God. Each mention of 'forgiveness' in the Old Testament adds different nuances to each sense of forgiveness. Psalm 32 adds a unique nuance to the understanding of forgiveness. This study, however, will not solely focus on forgiveness as a theological term, but will only try to determine the splendour

of forgiveness as contained in Psalm 32 to reach an understanding of the nuance that forgiveness in Psalm 32 adds.

This study avoids focussing on all the psalms of the first book of the *Psalter* (1-41). There will be, however, a part of the study that considers Psalms 25-34.

### **1.3. Aim and objectives**

This study aims to define the splendour of forgiveness that Psalm 32 adds to the understanding of forgiveness in the Old Testament and to better the understanding of what the *Sitz im Leben* of Psalm 32 could be.

The first objective of the study is to execute a synchronic analysis of Psalm 32 to understand the structure and *genre* of Psalm 32, as well as Psalm 25-34. The synchronic analysis will provide answers to questions regarding text and translation, outline and detailed analysis. This objective could yield clues to what possible uses the psalm could have, where the psalm could be utilised, what meaning phrases within Psalm 32 yield and what nuances of forgiveness Psalm 32 could add.

The second objective is to execute a diachronic analysis of Psalm 32 to understand the history and the *Sitz im Leben* of Psalm 32. The history of Psalm 32 includes the redactional history and the tradition history.

The third objective is to outline the theology of Psalm 32. This objective will specifically study the splendour of forgiveness in Psalm 32 and address some of the theological topics connected with Psalm 32.

The fourth objective is to outline a synthesis of the first three objectives, to provide a conclusive summary of what the splendour of forgiveness in Psalm 32 adds to the understanding of forgiveness.

### **1.4. Methodology**

This study is a literature and exegetical study. The literature study provides an overview of current research, while the exegetical study provides the exegesis to determine the meaning of the text.

The literature study aids the research that follows in different ways. The literature study ensures that the research is relevant. It provides an answer to this study whether the current hypothesis has been proven or disproven. The literature

study highlights the need for this study by offering areas of research that has not yet been studied or explored. The literature study takes place in part in § 1.7 'Literature review', but analysis throughout the study rests upon knowledge gathered from the literature study.

The exegetical study is done as part of the synchronic analysis. It gives detail analysis of Psalm 32 by systematically applying different tools to determine different meanings and nuances each phrase has. During this study, only the final form of the text will be studied, as seen in the BHS. The study uses the dictionary of Strong (Strong, 1890) as well the Abridged Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew-English Lexicon of the Old Testament (Whitaker *et al.*, 1906) to determine meanings of words and phrases in Psalm 32. The exegetical study compares how words and phrases that are utilised in Psalm 32 with the rest of the Hebrew Bible to yield nuances that words have.

The study furthermore does a synchronic and diachronic analysis. The Swiss linguist, Ferdinand de Saussure (1857–1913) first made the distinction between synchronic and diachronic analysis (Sampaolo, 2016:1). The synchronic analysis does a study of the text at present or at a point in time. The synchronic analysis done in this study looks at the time when the psalm was already part of the cultic life in the Ancient Near East. For this reason, a large portion of the Hebrew Bible could be utilised to add nuance to words and phrases found in Psalm 32.

A diachronic analysis follows this analysis. Another term for a diachronic analysis is historical aspects of the psalm. This part of the study focuses on the history of the text. Aspects of the history of the psalm include the formation, tradition and redaction history of Psalm 32. This analysis studies specifically the historical *Sitz im Leben*, traditional history and redactional history. The investigation into the redactional history analyses the formation Psalm 32 into its current form, its placement in the section of Psalms 25-34 as well as in the first book of the *Psalter*, Psalms 1-41.

## **1.5. Hypothesis**

Psalm 32 adds a nuance to the understanding of the splendour of forgiveness in the Old Testament. The splendour of forgiveness, as understood in Psalm 32, adds a nuance of grace, where God alone administers forgiveness. The consequence of God-administered forgiveness is that people get the opportunity to accept it, and it is the acceptance of the forgiveness that brings healing.

## **1.6. Outline of chapters**

### **1.6.1. Introduction**

The first chapter of the study is an introduction-chapter and the following topics are discussed: an introduction, actuality of the research is explained, the research question is addressed, aim and objectives are set out, methodologies are described, hypothesis is stated, chapters are outlined, terminologies that are utilised in the research are defined, the orthography is described, and a literature review is done.

### **1.6.2. Synchronic analysis**

In chapter two, a short introduction is given, followed by a study of the *genre* and *Sitz im Leben* of Psalm 32 and Psalms 25-34. It is followed by a structural analysis that outlines the text and translation of Psalm 32 and gives an outline of the psalm, followed by a detailed analysis of the text.

### **1.6.3. Diachronic analysis**

Chapter three explains diachronic aspects with an introduction, followed by the historical *Sitz im Leben* of Psalm 32, a tradition history (historical and cultic) and concludes with a redactional history, Psalms 25-34 and Book I (Pss 1-41).

### **1.6.4. Theology of Psalm 32 – Splendour of forgiveness**

Chapter four starts with an introduction, followed by theological claims found in Psalm 32 about the splendour of forgiveness. The chapter elaborates on its significance.

### **1.6.5. Synthesis**

Chapter five starts with an introduction, stating what the study was about and what the problem statement, aim and objectives, methodology and chapter outline were. It is followed by the research results, answering the question of what the study means that the modern-day understanding of forgiveness is. It is followed by what I suggest the future research of this study might be. A conclusion and hypothesis then conclude this chapter.

## **1.7. Orthography and terminology**

### **1.7.1. Reference system**

This study makes use of the adopted Harvard – Anglia (2008) reference system, with footnotes.

### 1.7.2. Abbreviations

- § - Chapter
- 1 Sam – 1 Samuel
- 2 Sam – 2 Samuel
- ABDB – Abridged Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew-English Lexicon of the Old Testament
- BHS – Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia
- Deut – Deuteronomium
- e.g. – for example
- Eccles – Ecclesiastes
- et al. – and others
- etc. – and so forth
- Ex – Exodus
- Ezek – Ezekiel
- Gen – Genesis
- Hab – Habakkuk
- Hos – Hosea
- i.e. – that is
- Isa – Isaiah
- Jer – Jeremiah
- Judg – Judges
- LEB – Lexham English Bible
- Lev – Leviticus
- Mic – Micah
- Neh - Nehemiah
- Num - Numbers
- Obad – Obadiah
- p. – page
- pp. – pages
- Pro – Proverbs
- Ps – Psalm
- Pss – Psalms
- Song – Song of Solomon
- v. – verse
- vv. – verses
- Zeph – Zephaniah

### 1.7.3. Bible translations

This study makes use of the Lexham English Bible (LEB)<sup>2</sup> translation unless differently stated.

### 1.7.4. List of terms

1. Diachronic analysis – ‘the branch of linguistics concerned with the study of phonological, grammatical, and semantic changes, the reconstruction of earlier stages of languages, and the discovery and application of the methods by which genetic relationships among languages can be demonstrated’ (Chauhan, 2010).
2. Forgiveness – ‘release from the guilt or penalty of an offence’ (Anon., 2019)
3. Form-criticism – ‘a method of biblical criticism that seeks to classify units of scripture into literary patterns (such as love poems, parables, sayings, elegies, legends) and that attempts to trace each type to its period of oral transmission. The purpose is to determine the original form and the relationship of the life and thought of the period to the development of the literary tradition’ (Chauhan, 2013).
4. Form critical approach – this approach ‘identify the form of each individual tradition unit so that its *genre* might be correctly identified and then attached to a historical situation.’ This approach ‘employed three key indices: *mood*, *form* and *Sitz im Leben*, where ‘mood’ referred to the affective dispositions that inspired the tradition, *form* to the structure of its discourse, and *Sitz im Leben* to the ‘life setting’ or context that produced the *genre* (*Gattung*) (Sparks, 2007:112).
5. Psalms – it is a ‘book of the Old Testament composed of sacred songs, or of sacred poems meant to be sung’ (Chopra, 2019).
6. *Psalter* – it is an alternative name for the psalms.
7. Redaction criticism – ‘in the study of biblical literature, (it is a) method of criticism of the Hebrew Bible (Old Testament) and the New Testament that examines the way the various pieces of the tradition have been assembled into the final literary composition by an author or editor’ (Stefon, 2012).
8. Semantic – it is connected with the meanings of words (Cambridge University Contributors, 2019).

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<sup>2</sup> Harris, et al. (2012).

9. Splendour – it is a great beauty that attracts admiration and attention (Cambridge University Contributors, 2019).
10. Synchronic analysis – the study of a language at a given point in time. The time studied may be either the present or a particular point in the past; synchronic analyses can also be made of dead languages, such as Latin. (Sampaolo, 2016).
11. Tradition history – or ‘tradition criticism’ is a method of criticism of the Hebrew Bible that attempts to find the stages of development of the oral tradition from its current presence in the Hebrew Bible, back to its historical emergence (Stefon, 2010).

### 1.8. Literature review

Brown (2014:5) argues that several of the psalms, no matter their dating, has the temple as its cultic setting. According to him, Psalm 32 is different in this regard, as it ‘bears little explicit connection to the centralised liturgy.’ Psalm 32 primarily refers to the ‘importance of teaching’. It may define them as ‘wisdom Psalms,’ but should not be regarded in the same sense as ‘Proverbs’.

Gunkel, according to Brown (2014:11), was responsible for the paradigm shift in the studies of the psalms. Gunkel developed form-critical research. Brown (2014:11) summarises the form-critical approach as research that ‘specialises in identifying types of literature based on *genre* (*Gattung*), consisting of common content, linguistic form, and life setting or *Sitz im Leben*’. Instead of studying the literary context of the psalm, Gunkel classified psalms together according to their *Sitz im Leben* (‘life setting’), and along each group formed a *Gattung*. He, therefore, analysed the *genre* of the psalm and argued that the meaning was found by studying Psalms with similar *genres*. Gunkel classified Psalms into these *genres*, and according to Brown (2014:13), these classifications have been reframed and refined ever since. Potgieter (2014:1) summarises Gunkel’s view regarding Psalm 32 as follows: ‘He regarded it as having a mixed *genre* in which the characteristics of a song of thanksgiving dominate. He described it as a song of thanksgiving of an individual intermingled (‘*durchsetzt*’) with motifs of wisdom poetry.’

Another major contributor to the study of the psalms was Mowinckel. The focus of Mowinckel’s research was to ‘to reconstruct the precise cultic occasion which has

produced [the psalms]' (Mowinckel, 2004 136). The two spaces that Psalms were read was either amid the 'great assembly' or in the confines of one's 'closet' (Brown, 2014:8). Brown (2014:14) summarised Mowinckel's research ideally when he says: 'Mowinckel treated the psalms somewhat as puzzle pieces that, when fitted together, reveal the rich choreography of movement, sound, and the sight of First Temple worship.'

Another contributor to the form-critical study of the psalms was Claus Westermann that dispensed of the term 'Thanksgiving Psalms'. Westermann (1981:34) argued that Thanksgiving Psalms have much in common with the Psalms of Praise. They might be a type of Praise Psalm. Longman and Enns (2008:805), however, disagree with Westermann by saying that most scholars today still follow the *genre* of thanksgiving. They cite Gerstenberger as an example.

Brown (2014:15) mentions that Martin Buss and Erhard Gerstenberger have 'reframed the discussion significantly' regarding cultic function. Contrary to what Mowinckel assumed, the religious life of ancient cultures also flourished with smaller institutions and social groups. According to Gerstenberger (1988:7-8, 14), there were services conducted of supplication or thanksgiving under the guidance of a 'ritual expert'. Buss (1964:320-322) defines a cult as a multifaceted and diverse set of expression denoting a whole that includes everything from major festivals to ritualised activity in the home to a person passing by a consecrated spot.

Brown (2014:15) mentions a recent influence on the study of the psalms, namely Walter Brueggemann. According to Brown, Brueggemann widens the concept of 'function' and 'cult' to make the psalms more accessible to modern readers. He creates three functional categories, Psalms of orientation, Psalms of disorientation, and Psalms of reorientation (Brueggemann, 1984:1-205).

Recent scholars used another method of studying the *Psalter* and is called *Sitz im Buch*. William P. Brown advocates the following: 'The mere fact that individual Psalms are collected in a particular sequence suggests literary and theological interaction, whether intended by the editors of the *Psalter*. Words, whether ancient or modern, inevitably take on a life of their own when set with other words' (2014:17). Hossfeld & Steiner (2013:240) argues that 'a basic problem when dealing with the Psalms is the fundamental question of which context one should consider for the



exegesis of these texts. The *Sitz im Leben* and the *Sitz im Buch* (setting in life and setting in the book) are two types of contextualization, although not necessarily in conflict: they can in fact be mutually supportive in answering the difficult question posed by Hermann Gunkel: ‘For what purpose was the *Psalter* combined?’

Brown (2014:17-18) highlights the last method, which scholars followed recently, and that is ‘the search for a ‘core’ or a ‘centre’ of the book of Psalms.’ The search for two types of ‘centres’ are mentioned: a theological centre and an anthropological centre. The dialogue about ‘finding a centre for the psalms’ continues as no study yielded satisfactory evidence.

As this study focuses on the splendour of forgiveness in Psalm 32 specifically, Gillingham (2014:201) wrote an article wherein she asks: ‘Who might have been responsible for compiling such a diverse collection?’ She (Gillingham, 2014:202) theorised that the psalms embrace two different temple cults. The former cult focused on the king, ‘with national and Theo-political interest’ and the latter with more under ‘the authority of the priesthood and concerned with how to live as a community under foreign rule’. Gillingham tries to find a group responsible for compiling the psalms. She suggests the ‘Levite singers’ might be the group and finds four reasons, one of which is ‘the attitude to the efficacy of cultic practice’ (Gillingham, 2014:206). According to her, ‘offering’ (or synonyms of ‘offering’) is not a common word the psalms. She offers Psalm 32 as an example of where God offers forgiveness in the Aaronide priesthood, but the means to that forgiveness is not mentioned (Gillingham, 2014:207). Her conclusion in this regard is focused less on the sacrifice and more on liturgy and singing. This conclusion will also become evident in this study.

Longman & Enns (2008:806-807) focuses on how the meaning of psalms differs depending on which *genre* the psalm is classified as.

Firstly, when studied as Gunkel would have understood the psalm, it was sung apart from temple ceremonies and was written by pious and prophetic poets who had a negative view of external worship and who wrote more personal songs. There, poets utilised known and mixed known *genres* for their songs. Longman & Enns (2008:806-807) illustrates the different *genres* within Psalm 32: ‘beatitude (Ps 32:1), the similitude (Ps 32:9) and the instruction (Ps 32:6-8).

Secondly, with a cultic emphasis, Mowinckel argued Gunkel's unmixed and pure forms only came later, after the composite forms. Thus, Mowinckel 'placed most Psalms in the period of the monarchy in the context of a New Year festival' and therefore the type is 'hidden behind the personal and didactic' (Longman & Enns, 2008:807).

Thirdly, using native *genre* designations, Longman & Enns (Longman & Enns, 2008:807) notes that Psalm 32 should be a thanksgiving psalm and dated late, utilised apart from the temple. The last, small-group, post-exilic, synagogue use, 'calls into question the priority of the cult and emphasises that there were rituals throughout Israel's history that served the needs of the common people in their small-group settings' According to this approach, local community worship only became prominent in the final phase of Old Testament history. Longman & Enns (2008:807) ideally summarise it by saying: 'The *Psalter* became a hymnbook for the synagogue communities of the Persian and Hellenistic periods. As older prayers were set in the postexilic context, a new emphasis on individual guilt and personal salvation arose. Psalm 32 reflects this changed social structure. It is utilised by the community of the faithful in a synagogue setting. No references are made to sacrifices, and the wisdom element is dominant. Such individual forms of exhortation are indicative of postexilic religion.'

The question about the *Sitz im Leben* and the *genre* of Psalm 32 is challenging to be strictly defined. Longman & Enns (2008:807-808) agree, and suggest '*genre* terms that are not native to the time of the literature' be utilised, as well as 'flexibility in the concept of *genre* and life setting better explains the evidence that one finds in the psalms.'

A note about the history of the scroll of Psalm 32, is summarised by Flint (2014:224). According to Flint (2014:224), forty scrolls containing or incorporating psalms had been published by 2000. These discoveries include the discoveries in the Judaean Desert, DJD 1 (1955) to the Cave 4 psalms scrolls in DJD 16 (2000) and the Nahal Hever psalm scroll in DJD 38 (2000) (Flint, 2014:224). Flint (2014:224) argues that 'of the 150 psalms in the traditional Masoretic-*Psalter*, no text has been found of twenty-seven of the psalms (Pss 1, 3-4, 20-21, 32, 41, 46?, 55, 57-58, 61, 64-65, 70, 72-75, 79-80, and 87, 90, 108?, 110, 111, 117). One reason for this imbalance is the

beginnings of rolled scrolls are usually on the outside and are thus far more prone to deterioration.’ This history means that Psalm 32 was near the edge of one of the *Psalter* Scrolls, either at the first or the last psalm of a scroll, thus ‘more prone to deterioration’.

Psalm 32 has also been studied to understand the rhetoric of ‘whole body as the ideal body’ by Wessels & Coetzee (2013:1-6). They argue the following about Psalm 32: ‘Psalm 32, as a psalm of thanksgiving, pictures God as the whole body in terms of the saviour, protector and healer of the broken (sinful) body.’ In their study, different Psalms serve as examples of authors that implements ‘body rhetoric’ in various *genres* of the psalms. We take note of this study, and instead of studying the rhetorical body in Psalm 32, the splendour of forgiveness forms our focus in Psalm 32.

The *Gattungen* of Psalm 32 has been widely regarded as a Wisdom Psalm with thanksgiving elements to it (Potgieter, 2014:1). Potgieter argues that the two stanzas in Psalm 32 contain the following message: ‘The parallel and inverse structure of its two stanzas demonstrate the aim of its author was to encourage the upright to foster an open, intimate relationship with YHWH in which transgressions are confessed, and YHWH’s benevolent guidance on the way of life is wisely accepted.’ Potgieter (2014:1-6) came to this conclusion after his structural analysis. The hypothesis of the study is to reach the same conclusion as Potgieter and to add the necessary nuance to forgiveness to illustrate its splendour.

Rodd (2007:377) summarises Psalm 32 as a ‘Psalm of joyous thanksgiving for healing and sin [that are] forgiven. One might agree with Rodd’s summary that verses 3 and 4 are ‘divine punishment’, but as this study will show, these two verses contain poetry and metaphors lost to the modern English reader. Rodd (2007:377) further summarises verses 8 and 9 where he argues that: ‘it is not clear who the speaker in verses 8-9 is’. Potgieter (2014:4) identifies the speaker as YHWH, due to the number of alliterations, assonance and rhyme contained in the verse. This study will later argue this point.

The Moody Bible Commentary provides a Christian reading of the psalms. Their approach is to ‘Writ[e] from a conservative, evangelical perspective that reaches across denominational lines’ (Rydelnik & Vanlaningham, 2014:13). This commentary compared themes in Psalm 32 with other passages in the Bible and cites how the New

Testament uses Psalm 32, e.g. Romans 4:4-8 refers to Psalm 32 regarding forgiveness. The commentary further extrapolates Christian truths based on the text of Psalm 32. Verses 8-11 shows, according to Moody's Commentary (2014:1119) that 'God's forgiveness fosters spiritual perception and moral clarity revealed by God in His Word.' This commentary does not provide enough insight needed in this study.

An article defending the thesis that Psalm 32 does not only contain wisdom elements but that Psalm 32 originated as a wisdom-teaching Psalm, was written by Botha (2014:1-9). Botha defends his thesis by comparing Psalm 32 with Proverbs 28:13-14. He summarises the aim of the psalm as follows: 'stubbornness in accepting the guilt of sin causes suffering, but that YHWH is eager to restore an intimate relationship with those worshippers who confess their guilt and are willing to accept his guidance on the way of life.' The study of Botha and the current study reach different conclusions. Forgiveness happens independent of the person receiving the forgiveness. It is instead the 'stubbornness in accepting' forgiveness 'that causes suffering'. Guilt is thus not a necessity, but a consequence of the stubbornness in accepting' forgiveness. This becomes clear later in the study.

## CHAPTER 2 – SYNCHRONIC ANALYSIS

### 2.1. Introduction

In researching the splendour of forgiveness, in Psalm 32, this study starts with synchronic analysis. This analysis encompasses the *genre*, *Sitz im Leben* and structure of the psalm. A synchronic analysis surveys text at present or at a point in time. The synchronic analysis done in this study looks at the time when the psalm was already part of the cultic life in the Ancient Near East. For this reason, a large portion of the Hebrew Bible could be utilised to add nuance to words and phrases found in Psalm 32.

### 2.2. Genre and *Sitz im Leben*

It was Hermann Gunkel that first introduced the term, *Sitz im Leben*. The study of the *Sitz im Leben* or the place of a psalm in the life of the first community helps modern researchers understand the psalm. The *Sitz im Leben* is the life setting (the faith community) where the psalm found meaning and lived out its purpose. This study does not aim to understand what the psalmist's idea for the meaning of the psalm was, but rather the function this psalm had in the first community.

Psalm 32 is part of a larger collection, Psalm 25 – 34. Zenger (2010.:49) calls this collection 'concentric'. Psalm 25 and Psalm 34 are marked, which form an interpretive frame around the psalms in between. Zenger (2010.:49) highlights that both Psalm 25 and Psalm 34 are alphabetic acrostics. Zenger also notes that there are four lines that begin word for word: 25:13 = 34:12, 25:15 = 34:16, 25:16 = 34:17, 25:22 = 34:23. Zenger (2010.:49) also argues that both psalms agree in their image of God and the ethical program. Lastly, Zenger (2010.:49) mentions that both psalms end with an anomaly that makes editorship a possibility.

Zenger (2010.:49) continues to describe that there is editorial input in the unit Psalm 25 to 34. He notes the three petitions of Psalms 26-28 as well as the three prayers, Psalm 30-32, that are well arranged behind Psalm 29 that shows concentric composition.

Zenger (2010.:49-50) identifies Psalms 26-28 which describe the three fundamental needs from which God is to save (sin, enemies and illness). Psalm 29

summarises those three needs, and Psalms 30-32 thank God for them. Psalm 32 mainly thanks God for the salvation from sin through forgiveness.

Zenger (2010.:50) contends that Psalm 33 might be a later addition to the unit of Psalm 25-34. He argues this because of the lack of a heading of Psalm 33 as well as revitalising the theology found in Psalm 29 by emphasising the goodness and love of YHWH. A mention of a different view on the place of Psalm 32 within a smaller section of the *Psalter* is that of Labuschagne (2010:627, 630, 633-634). He follows the school of thought that all letters have a numerical value and he arrives at his conclusions by this view. He contends that different sub-groups of psalms exist. He studied the Davidic psalms and found that these Davidic psalms each time has a few psalms without headings next to them in the *Psalter*. For this reason, he mentions the possibility of Psalm 30 and 31 not belonging in a sub-group, and that Psalm 32-41 is an 'irrefutable delineation'. This study does not follow this school of thought.

Psalm 32 thus fulfils the role of thanking God, especially for the forgiveness of sin as part of more substantial gratitude for salvation found in Psalms 25-34.

## **2.3. Structure**

### **2.3.1. Text and translation**

All Bible translators grapple with the task to translate a text from an ancient language like biblical Hebrew to modern English. Someone familiar with this task is deClaissé-Walford (2013:190-204). In her article, she explores the different ways to translate a psalm, by focussing on Psalms 3 and 22. She shows how different a translation of a psalm can look, changing a 'normal' psalm like Psalm 3, to a psalm that shows God as the Eternal Gardener. DeClaissé-Walford was part of the translation of the book of the psalms for the Bible translation called the Voice (Ecclesia Bible Society Contributors, 2012:1664) namely an example of how different a translation of the Hebrew Bible can look when one envisions a different purpose. For example, here is an extract from the Voice Bible Translation of Psalm 32:8-9:

8 I will teach you and tell you the way to go and how to get there;  
I will give you good counsel, and I will watch over you.

9 But don't be stubborn and stupid like horses and mules who, if not  
reined by leather and metal, will run wild, ignoring their masters.

In this study, however, a more literal translation of the Hebrew text will be followed.

	My Idiomatic Translation	My Literal Translation	BHS
1.	To David, a Maskil Blessed is he whose transgressions are forgiven; whose sin is covered	For/to David a Maskil blessed is he that is forgiven his transgression that is covered his sin.	לְדָוִד מְשָׁכִיל אֲשֶׁרִי נְשׁוּי־פָשַׁע בְּסוּי חַטָּאָה
2.	Blessed is the man to whom the Lord does not impute iniquity and in whose spirit, there is no deceit	Blessed is he the man not does he imputes the Lord iniquity, and there is nothing in whose spirit deceit	אֲשֶׁרִי אָדָם לֹא יַחְשָׁב יִהְיֶה לוֹ עֵז וְאִין בְּרוּחֹו רְמִיָּה:
3.	When I was caused to be silent, my bones worn out through my roaring all day.	When I was caused to be silent, they were worn out my bones through my roaring all the day	כִּי־הִחַרְשֹׁתִי בָלוּ עַצְמִי בְּשִׁאֲגָתִי כָּל־הַיּוֹם:
4.	For day and night, your hand was heavy on me: it turned my vitality into the drought of summer. Selah	For a day and a night, it was heavy on me your hand it was turned my vitality into the drought of summer Selah	כִּי יוֹמָם וּלְיַלְהָא תִּכְבֵּד עָלַי יָדְךָ נִהְפָּךְ לְשִׁגְי בְּחַרְבְּנִי קִיץ סֶלָה:
5.	I acknowledged my sin to You, and I didn't hide my iniquity. I said: 'I will confess concerning my transgressions to YHWH.' And he/she/it forgave the guilt of my sin. Selah	My sin I acknowledged to you and my iniquity not do I hid I said I will confess concerning my transgressions to YHWH and you lifted the guilt of my sin Selah	חַטָּאתַי אֹדִיעֶךָ וְעֹנִי לֹא־כִסִּיתִי אֲמִרְתִּי אוֹדָה עָלַי פִּשְׁעֵי לִיהוָה וְאַתָּה נִשְׂאתָ עֹן חַטָּאתִי סֶלָה:
6.	Therefore, let all the faithful pray unto You at a time for finding You. Surely, at a flood of great waters, they will not cause to reach unto him.	For this let pray all the faithful / godly unto you at a time for finding you surely at a flood of waters of great unto him not they will cause to reach	עַל־זֹאת יִתְפַּלֵּל כָּל־ חֹסֵד אֱלֹהִים לְעֵת מְצֵא רַק לְשֹׁטֵף מִיָּם רַבִּים אֲלֵיו לֹא יִגִּיעוּ:
7.	You are my hiding place from trouble. You preserve me, with songs of deliverance you surround me. Selah	You are a hiding place for me from trouble You preserve me with songs of deliverance of you surround me Selah	אַתָּה סֶתֶר לִי מִצָּר תִּצְרַנִּי רְנִי פִלְט תִּסְבְּבֵנִי סֶלָה:
8.	I will instruct you, and I will teach you in a way which you shall go. Let me guide you with my eye upon you.	I will instruct you, and I will teach you in a way which you shall go. Let me you guide upon you with my eye	אֲשַׁכִּילְךָ וְאוֹרְךָ בְּדַרְךָ־ זוֹ תֵלֵךְ אֵינְעֶצֶה עָלֶיךָ עֵינִי:

9.	Do not be as the horse or the mule, without understanding, that needs his tackle: his bridle and rein for restraint to not come near unto you	Do not be as the horse [or] as a mule without understanding with bridle and rein his tackle for restraint or he/she/it does not come near unto you	אל- תהיו כסוס כפרד אין הָבִין בְּמִתְגַּי וְרִסן עֲדִין לְבָלוֹם לְבַל קָרַב אֵלַיךְ:
10.	Many [are the] sorrows of the wicked, but he who trusts in the YHWH: loyal love surrounds him	Many sorrows of the wicked but he who trusts In the YHWH loyal love surrounds him	רַבִּים מִכְּאוֹבִים לְרָשָׁע וְהַבּוֹטָח בַּיהוָה הֶסֶד סוֹבְבֵנוּ:
11.	Be glad in YHWH and rejoice, you righteous, and shout, all you upright in heart!	Be glad in YHWH and rejoice you righteous and shout all you upright in heart	שִׂמְחוּ בַּיהוָה וְגִילוּ צְדִיקִים וְהַרְנִינוּ כָּל- יִשְׂרָאֵל:

### 2.3.2. Outline

An outline of Psalm 32 comprises mainly of two verses per section. The study has found that every two verses in the psalm (except for the heading at the beginning of verse 1 and verse 5 that is a personal confession) forms a unit with a unique meaning.

The content of these units is discussed in detail in §2.3.3. Some verses in Psalm 32 shares common themes (see Table i). An uppercase letter shows that they share a widely prevalent idea, the number indicates a similar idea and the lowercase letter shows that the phrase is unique and thus should occupy its own line in Table i. For example, A1a and A1b share a closer-related idea than A1a and A2a. For example, A1a and A1b share the motif of a happy person whose sin has been removed. But A1a and A2a only share the motif of a happy person.

A sentence that ends with ‘Selah’ serves as a marker to indicate the transition to a new thought and thus a new strophe, for example, vv. 4, 5 and 7.

Weiser (1975:282) divided Psalm 32 as follows: The psalm opens with a ‘Beatitude’ (vv. 1-2) which classifies the psalm into a general form. He argues that the theme of the psalm is the poet’s personal experience of the blessing of the forgiveness of sins. Kirkpatrick (1921:162) gives three meanings for forgiveness: ‘taking a burden away’, ‘as a covering (so that the foulness of sin no longer meets the eye of the judge and calls for punishment)’, ‘as cancelling of a debt (which is no longer reckoned against the offender)’. Bullock (2018:143), when discussing Psalm 32, argues that Yet



it is not the power of confession alone, but confession coupled with divine forgiveness. The argument that Bullock (2018:143) makes highlights the importance of divine forgiveness. When compared to older arguments: that of Weiser (1975:282), that focuses on the personal advantage, and Kirkpatrick (1921:162), that focussed on the ethimological meaning of the word forgiveness, Bulluck (2018:143) highlights the often misunderstood importance of forgiveness and over emphasis on confession. This article will show how the nuance of divine forgiveness is present in Psalm 32.

Weiser (1975:282) further explains that verses 3-7 describe a confession before God. This study separated this part into three, and called is: 'the agony without forgiveness,' 'personal confession as a last resort' and 'call to prayer and an example of prayer'. The remarks of Weiser (2975:282) about verses 3-7 places the emphasis on the suffering, strivings of conscience and personal experience of the psalmist, while the thesis of this study is that rather forgiveness plays the central role in this psalm as will become evident in this study. Weiser's (2975:282) summary of verses 3 – 7 supports this study: 'The first part of the psalm concludes with a personal note, expressing the psalmist's trust in God and his hopeful outlook into the future.' One should add that the psalmist expectation of the splendour of forgiveness provides this 'hopeful outlook.'

Weiser (2975:282) summarises the second part (vv. 8-11), : 'The psalmist draws some instructive conclusions from his own experience by uttering a general warning against the hardness of heart and by urging his fellow men to put their trust in God's grace.' Weiser (2975:282), following the individual outlook in the first part (v. 7), notices that the second part concludes with a call to all the godly ones to rejoice and be glad in the Lord, a call which at once looks back into the past and forward into the future. [1-2, 3-4, 5, 6, 7, 8-10, 11.]. In contrast to Weiser (2975:282), this study does not see the contrast between an 'individual' first part and a 'collective' in the second part. The psalm is rather divided between before and after the psalmist received forgiveness (at the end of Ps 32:5).

Kirkpatrick (1921:161) divides Psalm 32 as follows. 1-2 (The blessedness of forgiveness), 3-4 (The illustration of this truth from the psalmist's own experience), 5 (The way of restoration), 6 (An exhortation based on experience), 7 (The psalmist

addresses Yahweh), 8 (who is the speaker?), 9-10 (A warning directed to all not to resist God's will), 11 (Share the joy).

Psalm 32 is structured as follows:

### Heading (32:1a-b)

	1 Of David. A Maskil.
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### Introduction to the splendour of forgiveness (32:1c-2j)

quatrain	<b>A1a</b> Happy is he whose transgression is taken away, <b>A1b</b> whose sin is covered. <b>A2a</b> [2] Happy is a person to whom YHWH does not impute iniquity <b>A2b</b> and in whose spirit there is no deceit.
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### The agony without forgiveness (32:3a-4k)

quatrain	<b>B1a</b> [3] When I kept silent, my bones were worn out <b>B1b</b> [my bones were worn out] due to my groaning all day. <b>B2a</b> [4] For day and night, your hand was heavy upon me. <b>B2b</b> [ <i>For day and night</i> ] My vigour was changed into the dry heat of summer. Selah
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### Personal Confession as a last resort (32:5)

quatrain	<b>C1a</b> [5] I made known my sin to you, <b>C1b</b> and my iniquity I did not cover. <b>C2a</b> I said, 'I will confess concerning my transgressions to YHWH,' <b>C2b</b> but you took away the guilt of my sin. Selah
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### Call to prayer and example of prayer (32:6a-7i)

sestet	<b>D1a</b> [6] Therefore let all the faithful pray to you <b>D1b</b> at the time for finding you. <b>D1c</b> Surely at the flood of many waters they will not reach him. <b>D2a</b> [7] You are my hiding place from trouble. <b>D2b</b> You preserve me with cries of deliverance. <b>D2c</b> You surround me. Selah
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### Dialogue interjected by YHWH (32:8a-9k)

sestet	<b>E1a</b> [8] I[b] will instruct you and teach you <b>E1b</b> in the way that you should go. <b>E1c</b> I will advise you with my eye upon you. <b>E2a</b> [9] Do not be like a horse or like a mule, without understanding; <b>E2b</b> that needs his tackle—bridle and rein—for restraint <b>E2c</b> or he would not come near you.
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### Final warning and call to worship (32:10a-11f)

quatrain	<b>F1a</b> [10] Many are the pains of the wicked, <b>F1b</b> but for the one who trusts YHWH loyal love surrounds him. <b>F2a</b> [11] Be glad in YHWH and rejoice, you righteous, <b>F2b</b> and shout for joy, all you upright of heart.
----------	---

Table i

The detailed analysis that follows the outline shows different links to different verses within Psalm 32. The relationships that are described are as follows: verse 2 and verse 9 (see Table 1.1), verse 3 and verse 4 (see Table 1.2), verse 5 within itself (see Table 1.3), verses 6 and 7 with verses 10 and 11 (see Table 1.4), verse 8 and verse 9 (see Table 1.5) and verse 5 with verse 10 (see Table 1.6). These different links are explained in §2.3.3.

Psalm 32:2	Psalm 32:9
יִחַשְׁבֹּ	אֶל־תִּהְיוּ
וְאִין	בְּסוּס כְּפָרָד׃
בְּרוּחוֹ	אִין
רְמִיָּה	הַבֵּין

Table 1.1

Psalm 32:3	Psalm 32:4
כִּי־ (when)	כִּי (for)
הִחַרְשֵׁתִי (I kept silence)	יוֹמָם (day)
בָּלוּ (worn out)	וְלַיְלָה (and night)
עַצְמוֹתַי (my bones)	תִּכְבֵּד (was heavy)
בְּשִׁאֲגוֹתַי (through my roaring)	עָלַי (upon me)
כָּל־ (all)	יָדְךָ (your hand)
הַיּוֹם: (the day)	נִהְפָּךְ (is turned)
	לְשִׁדְּי (my moisture)
	בְּחֶרְבָּנִי (into the drought)
	קִיץ (of summer)
	סֵלָה: (Selah)

Table 1.2

**Psalm 32:5**

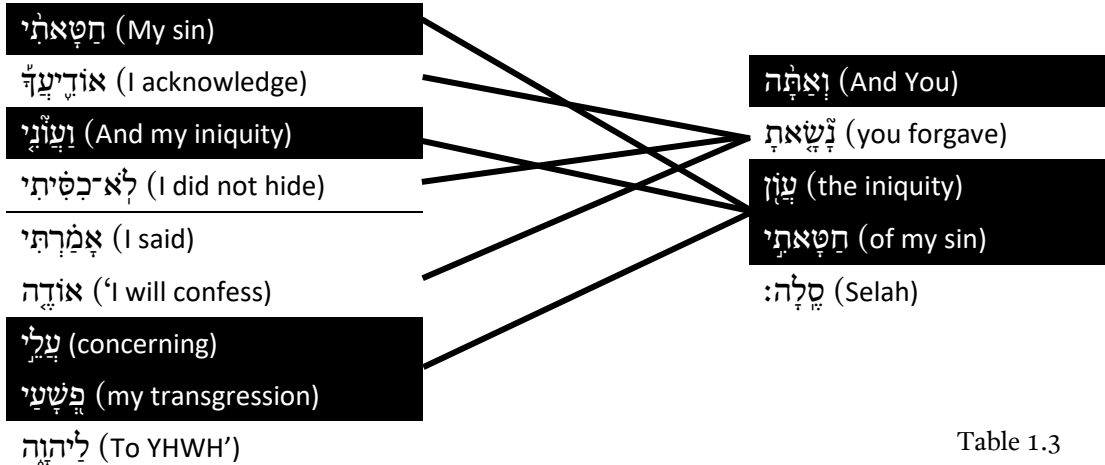


Table 1.3

**Verses 6 and 7**

**Verses 10 and 11**

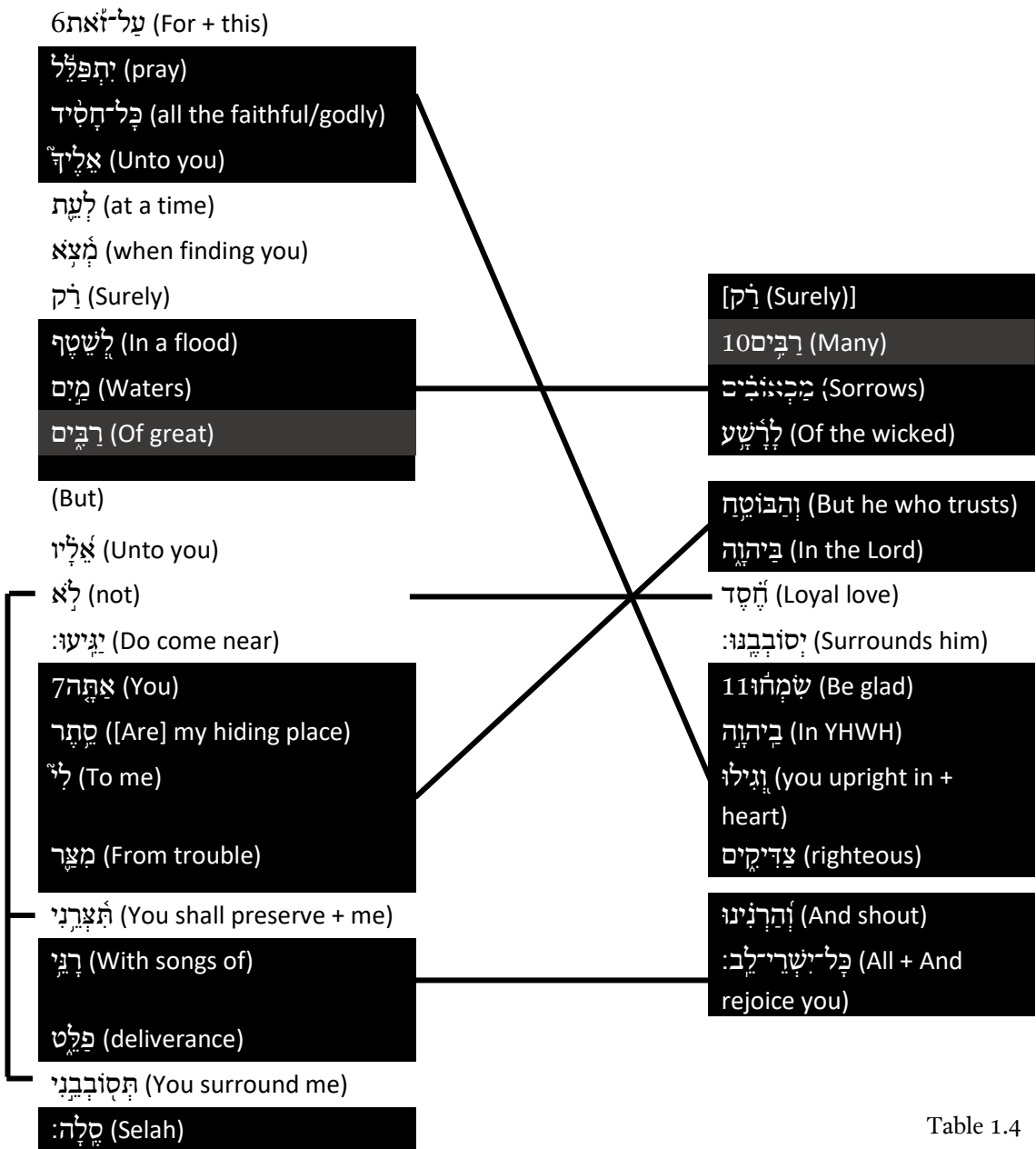


Table 1.4

Verse 8	Verse 9
אֲשַׁבֵּילְךָ 8 (I will instruct you)	אֲלֵ-תִהְיֶינָּהּ 9 (Do not + be)
וְאִנְיָ (and I will teach you)	כָּסוּס ([not] As + the horse)
בְּדַרְךָ-זֶה (In the way + that)	כִּפְרָד ([or not] as + a mule)
תֵּלֵךְ (You shall go)	אֵין (without)
אֵיטָעָה (I will guide)	הִבִּין (understanding)
עָלֶיךָ (upon you)	בְּמַחְגָּ-וּרְסָן (With + bridle + and + rein)
עִינָי: (With my eye)	פְּדִיָּו (His mouth)
	לְבָלוֹם (To hold)
	בֹּל (not)
	קָרַב (To come near)
	אֵלָיְךָ: (Unto you)

Table 1.5

Psalm 32:5	Psalm 32:10
חַטָּאתַי (My sin)	[רַק] (Surely)]
אֹדֵינִי (I acknowledge)	רַבִּים 10 (Many)
וְעוֹנֵי (And my iniquity)	מְכַאֲבִים (Sorrows)
לֹא-כִסִּיתִי (I did not hide)	לְרָשָׁע (Of the wicked)
אָמַרְתִּי (I said)	וְהַבֹּטֵחַ (But he who trusts)
אֹדָה ('I will confess)	בַּיהוָה (In the Lord)
עָלַי (concerning)	חֶסֶד (Loyal love)
פְּשָׁעִי (my transgression)	יְסֻבְּבָנּוּ: (Surrounds him)
לַיהוָה (To YHWH')	
וְאַתָּה (And You)	
נָשָׂאתָ (you forgave)	
עֲוֹן (the iniquity)	
חַטָּאתַי (of my sin)	
סֵלָה: (Selah)	

Table 1.6

### 2.3.3. Detail analysis

#### 2.3.3.1. Heading (32:1a-b)

The structural analysis of Psalm 32 is necessary to determine how the first audience received and understood the text. In this study, a possible picture is painted of the splendour of forgiveness in Psalm 32.

The heading of Psalm 32 reads לְדָוִד מְשֻׁבֵּלִים<sup>3</sup>. Strong (1890) suggests the name David is spelt the same way as דָּוִד, meaning ‘beloved,’ ‘father’s brother’ or ‘love.’ A more literal translation might mean ‘to boil’, and by implication, it might figuratively mean ‘to love’, ‘lover’ or ‘friend’. The opening words of this psalm could read: ‘Psalm to a beloved one/friend’<sup>4</sup>. To translate the heading as ‘to a beloved one/friend’ would add meaning that was not necessarily there. The reason this possibility of translation is given here is to showcase how a reader more than two thousand five hundred years ago could see the ‘double meaning’ and that would contribute towards evidence for the splendour of forgiveness.

#### 2.3.3.2. Introduction to the splendour of forgiveness (1c-2j)

Psalm 32:1c-2j is seen by this study as the introduction to the splendour of forgiveness. This passage idiomatically reads as follows:

*Blessed is he whose transgressions are forgiven; whose sin is covered  
Blessed is the man to whom the Lord does not impute iniquity and in whose spirit,  
there is no deceit*

---

<sup>3</sup> מְשֻׁבֵּלִים translates in its infinitive form as “to be prudent, be circumspect, wisely understand, prosper. lthpa’el) to consider, contemplate”. The first occurrence in the Hebrew Bible was found in Samuel 18:14. The King James Version reads as follows: “And David behaved himself wisely in all his ways, and, the LORD was with him.” Note “behaved himself wisely” is the translation of Maskil, and it is attributed to David as well as in Psalm 32. The word appears 13 times in its form found in Psalm 32. The base word: שָׁבַל appears sixty-three times in the Hebrew Bible. Weiser (1975:280-281) notes that it probably refers to some type of a hymn, and could be translated as “didactic poem”, although it doesn’t correlate with the other thirteen psalms with a similar title.

<sup>4</sup> Carlson (1997:157) explains the etymology of the name “David”. He argues that “the tradition connects the name *Davidh* with the root *ydd*, “to love,” and the appellative *dodh* (דָּוִד)”. This means that *Davidh* relates to *dodh* (“darling” or “paternal uncle”). He further argues that “darling” is the more probable translation.

This phrase (Ps 32:1c-2j) can be divided into two parts, verse 1 and verse 2. Weiser (1975:283) summarized this phrase as written by someone that attains blessed knowledge and that can be seen as good before God after an agonising battle.

אַשְׁרֵי נְשׁוּי־פָּשַׁע

Happy is he [the person] whose transgression is taken away,

‘Happy’ (אַשְׁרֵי) appears twice in verse 1 and once the phrase is assumed due to poetic freedom. In verse 1 where ‘happy’ (אַשְׁרֵי) is considered and utilised, it the adjective to passive particles. In verse 2, ‘happy’ (אַשְׁרֵי) is an adjective to a noun, ‘person’ (אָדָם). The term, ‘person’ (אָדָם) may be assumed in the second half of verse 2.

Gillingham (2014:206) suggests that the author was part of the ‘Levite singers’ and sets the table for the discussion regarding forgiveness. Gillingham Kirkpatrick (1921:161) and Bullock (2018:143) agree that forgiveness is the focus of these two verses, and Kirkpatrick summarises it beautifully by stating that ‘penitence is the indispensable condition for receiving it (forgiveness)’. Note that he does indicate that it is a ‘condition’ and not an ‘action’. Bullock (2018:143), however, rightly warns against the over emphasis of confession at the cost of divine forgiveness. The hypothesis of this study agrees with this notion.

The author starts the psalm with the phrase ‘happy’ (אַשְׁרֵי)<sup>5</sup>. In Deuteronomium 33:29, ‘happy’ (אַשְׁרֵי) appears for the first time in the Hebrew Bible. Like in Psalm 32:1, it refers to the joy created when forgiveness takes place. ‘Happy’ (אַשְׁרֵי) is also the word that the *Psalter* starts within Psalm 1:1:

אַשְׁרֵי הָאִישׁ-- אֲשֶׁר לֹא הִלָּךְ, בְּעֵצַת רְשָׁעִים  
וּבְדַרְךְ חַטָּאִים, לֹא עָמַד, וּבִמְוֹשֵׁב לְצִים, לֹא יִשָּׁב

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<sup>5</sup> אַשְׁרֵי appears 45 times in the Hebrew Bible and Strong (1890) define it as the intersection of the base: אָשַׁר which mean: “A primitive root; to be straight (used in the widest sense, especially to be level, right, happy); figuratively to go forward, be honest, prosper: - (call, be) bless (-ed, happy), go, guide, lead, relieve.”

A Jewish Rabbi, Jonathan Magonet, wrote in response to Sue Gillingham's article: 'The reception of Psalm 137 in Jewish and Christian traditions.' In this article Magonet (2013:83-88), writes that the word <sup>6</sup>'happy' (אשרי) carries a special meaning in the *Psalter*.

As Magonet (2013) suggests, the use of אשרי in Psalm 32, is not only utilised twice, but it appears in Psalm 32 in all three contexts: 'those who trust in God' (Ps 32:10), 'whose sins are forgiven' (Ps 32:1-2) and 'who are taught by God' (Ps 32:8).

The reason for exuberant 'happiness' (אשרי), is that he is 'forgiven' (נְשׂוּי). The phrase is expressed in Qal Passive Participle form and is also in the third person singular. Thus, someone 'is forgiven' in the present tense. Because 'forgiven' is found in the passive tense, it is unclear who forgave, and the psalm only highlights who is forgiven. Lawrence (1996:805) argues that the link between happiness and forgiveness in Psalm 32 is that Psalm 32 'functions as an important check against any tendency to ... (think that) to be righteous is a matter of being sinless, but a matter of being forgiven, of being open to God's instruction.'

Snyman (2004:158) mentions that 'the Sexta Manuscript has a reading meaning 'to forget' and accordingly reads 'to carry' or 'to forgive' (נשא). There are no other Hebrew manuscripts that contain this reading, and for this reason, the reading of the Masoretic Text should be retained.'

'Is taken away' (נְשׂוּי) is unrelated to any other base word<sup>7</sup> and is first utilised in Genesis 4:13 when Cain tells YHWH (יהוה) that his sin is too great 'to bear' (מְנַשֵּׂא). It

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<sup>6</sup> "There is, however, a possible clue in the use of the word אשרי ('happy') in the closing verses. Of its thirty-eight appearances in the Hebrew Bible, twenty-five of them are in the book of Psalms. Without exception they belong in hymnic evocations of the happiness of those who trust in God, whose sins are forgiven, and who are taught by God" (Magonet, 2013:83-88).

<sup>7</sup> , נְשׂוּי however forms part of these words: יִשְׂשַׁכָּר (Issachar), מְשָׂא (a burden or figuratively an utterance), מְשָׂא (partiality), מְשָׂאָה (a conflagration), מְשָׂאת (a raising, as of the hands in prayer, or rising like the rising of a flame, מְתַנַּשֵּׂא (supreme exaltation), נָשָׂא (carry away, make insurrection, take), נְשִׂאת (the passive participle of נְשׂוּי , something taken, a present or a gift), נְשׂוּיָהּ (The feminine passive participle of נְשׂוּי means something borne, and may mean carriage), נְשִׂיא (exalted one, king, or rising mist), שָׂאת (an elevation or leprous scab, figuratively cheerfulness or exaltation in rank or character). The Greek equivalent is ἀίρω.



is of significance because the Mosaic law was not yet given to Moses. If there were no law, it means that 'is taken away' (נָשָׂוּי) does not refer to trespasses against the law that is taken away. The question then arises: why did Cain think he needed his sin to 'be taken away' (נָשָׂוּי), but that he/she did not deserve forgiveness? Maybe he/she thought that one should deserve to have his/her sin 'taken away' (נָשָׂוּי)?

God-administered forgiveness allows people to accept sins 'to be taken away' (נָשָׂוּי) by YHWH. It is the acceptance of the forgiveness that starts the healing. Cain did not understand God-administered forgiveness in this way, as he tried to 'to bear' (מִנְשָׂא) it himself (Gen. 4:13).

Gillingham does not see the acceptance of forgiveness as an action. According to Gillingham (2014:207), 'offering' (or synonyms of 'offering') is not a common word in the psalms and uses Psalm 32 as an example of where God offers forgiveness in the Aaronide priesthood, but the means to that forgiveness is not mentioned (Gillingham, 2014:207).

This synchronic study, however, shows that the author does receive forgiveness, and the means to forgiveness is the acceptance of forgiveness. The author, however, does not receive forgiveness as in the Aaronide priesthood, but by accepting forgiveness from YHWH. This acceptance happens with confession (Ps 32:5). Weiser (1975:283) states that forgiveness has two necessary parts: 'man's absolute truthfulness in his relationship with God and his self-form, together with God's grace.' There is thus one act from God (grace), and one-act from man (acceptance).

נָשָׂוּי<sup>8</sup> is often translated in the Pentateuch as 'lift up', 'take up' or 'bear.' Up until Esther, נָשָׂוּי<sup>9</sup> is interpreted as 'take up', 'lift', 'bear' and 'bring' with some exceptions.

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<sup>8</sup> If נָשָׂוּי can provide a different understanding regarding forgiveness, where in the Hebrew was it utilized? There are only two books in the Hebrew Bible that do not contain נָשָׂוּי, namely Obadiah and Zephaniah.

<sup>9</sup> נָשָׂוּי occur six hundred and fifty-three times in the Hebrew Bible. נָשָׂוּי appears forty-three times in the Psalms, and twice in Psalm 32. In Psalm 93:3 נָשָׂוּי is utilized three times to refer to the sound of water "lifted up".

In Job, one finds that אָשַׁף is translated more often with ‘accept’, ‘fetch’ and ‘take’. In the Psalms, אָשַׁף is translated with ‘lift’, ‘taken up’ and ‘forgive’.

בְּסוּי תַּטְּאֶה

whose sin is covered.

The psalmist utilised synonyms to conceptualise forgiveness and reason for ‘happiness’ (אשרי), as בְּסוּי has בָּסָה as its root. בָּסָה means ‘to plump’, ‘to fill up hollows’, and by implication ‘to cover’ (either for clothing or secrecy), ‘clad self’, ‘cloth’, ‘conceal’, ‘cover’, ‘hide’ or ‘overwhelm’ (Strong, 1890). The verb differs from אָשַׁף in the literal sense of the word. Where אָשַׁף focuses on ‘lifting up’, ‘raising up’ or ‘taking away’, בְּסוּי means ‘to conceal’ or ‘to cover’ and is expressed in the Qal passive participle<sup>10</sup>.

בְּסוּי is mentioned in connection with sin or iniquity<sup>11</sup>. According to my calculation, בְּסוּי appears one hundred and fifty-two times in the Hebrew Bible, and only eight times to sin or iniquity covered. It was utilised to convey an understandable message to a broad audience. בְּסוּי may refer to forgiveness or to a temporary covering that can later be undone. When בְּסוּי is not utilised in relation to the context of sin or iniquity, it denotes a temporary cover, for example, the covering of the mountains by waters (Gen. 7:19), the covering of nakedness by clothes (Gen. 9:23) or the cover of shame on a person (Ps 44:15). בְּסוּי is introduced in Psalm 32 and utilised twice (Ps 32:1, 5). בְּסוּי appears another 15 times in the Psalms. When one studies the context where the word is utilised in the Psalms, there are about three different contexts in which the word is used. Firstly, בְּסוּי is employed seven times in connection with sin<sup>12</sup>.

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<sup>10</sup> The only regularly Qal passive verbs found are the Qal passive participle as in בְּסוּי. Verbs in the Qal stem formation does not have a specific meaning per se but do have some semantic categories. בְּסוּי might form part of the “Stative” verbs because it denotes a condition or state that something or someone is in.

<sup>11</sup> In Lev. 4:8; Neh. 4:5; Ps 32:1, 5; 85:2; Job 31:33; Isa. 26:21 and 59:6.

<sup>12</sup> See Pss 32:1, 5; 85:2; righteous (40:1), shame (44:15; 69:7) or mischief (140:10).

Secondly, כִּטְוִי appears five times to depict people and death<sup>13</sup>. Thirdly, כִּטְוִי is used five times in relation to nature<sup>14</sup>.

In Psalm 32, חַטָּאת is used with regards to ‘sin’ (חַטָּאת)<sup>15</sup>. The term can be translated as ‘an offence’, or as ‘a sacrifice for an offence’. ‘Sin’ (חַטָּאת) is the feminine of חָטָא which means a ‘crime’ or its penalty. חָטָא has חָטָא as its root. חָטָא means to ‘miss a target’, and figuratively it means ‘to sin.’ It generally means ‘to forfeit,’ ‘lead astray’ or ‘to condemn.’

One other place where the same form appears, is in Psalm 109:7. In both verses (32:2 and 109:7), ‘sin’ is found in the female singular form. כִּטְוִי is usually utilised in conjunction with a feminine word. It might be why ‘sin’ (חַטָּאת) is written in the female form. Another explanation might be that ‘sin’ (חַטָּאת) is considered as a greater sin than ‘to miss a target’ (חָטָא), or that ‘sin’ (חַטָּאת)<sup>16</sup> refers to a sin-offering like in Psalm 40:6.

אַשְׁרֵי אָדָם לֹא יַחְשֹׁב יַחְשֵׁב יְהוָה לּוֹ עוֹן

Happy is a person to whom YHWH does not impute iniquity

Psalm 32:2 starts with the same word as verse 1, namely אַשְׁרֵי. The word is translated as ‘happy’ or ‘blessed’<sup>17</sup>. Its root is אָשַׁר which means in the broadest sense ‘to be straight’, but it can also indicate to be ‘level’, ‘right’ and ‘happy.’ Figuratively it means ‘to go forward,’ ‘to be honest’ or ‘to prosper’<sup>18</sup>. The phrase denotes that a verse is a ‘beatitude’. McCann (2005:340-348) mentions that there are eight beatitudes<sup>19</sup> in

<sup>13</sup> The shadow of death (44:19), horror (55:5), their enemies (106:11), the company (106:17) or the first person (143:9).

<sup>14</sup> The sea (78:53), the hills (80:1), the deep (104:6), the earth (104:9) or the heavens (147:8).

<sup>15</sup> Koehler & Baumgartner (2000d:979).

<sup>16</sup> This form is only found eight times in the Hebrew Bible, while its root, חָטָא is found thirty-three times in the Hebrew Bible. The origin word of חָטָא is חָטָא, and it is found two hundred and thirty-eight times in the Hebrew Bible.

<sup>17</sup> The following statement highlights the ‘blessed’ quality of man: “The syntactic extension of the form often occurs through a noun: אֲשֶׁר” (Sæbø, 1997:290).

<sup>18</sup> It may also refer to “go”, “guide”, “lead”, “relieve” and “bless”.

<sup>19</sup> Pss 1:1(-2); 2:12; 32:1; 32:2; 33:12; 34:9; 40:5; 41:2.

Book I of the *Psalter*. He argues that the mention of אֲשֶׁרִי, especially in Psalm 1 verse 1, plays ‘a crucial role in the book of Psalms.’ It is difficult to agree with all of McCann (2005:340) arguments, but this argument surely adds to the purpose of Psalm 32. In this regard, Psalm 32 adds the nuance of אֲשֶׁרִי to the understanding of the purpose of forgiveness.

אֲשֶׁרִי is an interjective *fomular*. The gender of the word is presumably masculine, as there is no definite evidence in Hebrew that its gender is male. It is the second time that אֲשֶׁרִי appears in Psalm 32.

Moreover, it forms a rhyming pattern in the psalm, as both the first and the second verses start with אֲשֶׁרִי. The rhyming form highlights the message of the psalm, and it might illustrate the *Sitz im Leben* of Psalm 32. A psalm meant to focus on blessings. There are only four verses that start with אֲשֶׁרִי<sup>20</sup>. There are a few verses in the *Psalter* that starts with אֲשֶׁר<sup>21</sup>. The different *genres* of each of these psalms have insufficient evidence that the interjection אֲשֶׁרִי usually denotes a specific class of Psalms. To the contrary, the only *genre* that does not include psalms with this interjection is ‘Songs of trust’, ‘Covenant Songs’ and ‘temple liturgies’. The function of a verse that starts with אֲשֶׁרִי can be deduced by studying other occurrences of the word in the Hebrew Bible. When one considers all the psalms that contain or start with ‘happy’ (אֲשֶׁרִי), four major themes reoccur: ‘Provision’, ‘Relationship with God’, ‘Dealing with sin’ and ‘Trust in God’. These themes that reoccur are also the reasons why some psalmists define the peasants to be ‘happy’ (אֲשֶׁרִי). Psalm 32 follows this line of thinking, as the psalmist urges the audience to be ‘happy’ (אֲשֶׁרִי) because sin has been ‘covered’ (כִּסְיוֹ).

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<sup>20</sup> These are Deut 33:29; 1 Kgs 10:8; 2 Chr 9:7, and Job 5:17.

<sup>21</sup> Those are: Deut 33:29; 1 Kgs 10:8; 2 Chr 9:7, Job 5:17, Pss 1:1; 32:1, 2; 33:12; 40:4; 41:1; 65:4; 84:4; 5, 12; 89:15; 94:12; 106:3; 112:1; 119:1, 2; 127:5; 128:1; 137:9; 144:15 and 146:5.

In the rest of the writings, the term ‘happy’ (אֲשֶׁרִי) also appears. It is found only once in Job (5:17), where Eliphaz tells Job that he will be ‘happy’ (אֲשֶׁרִי) when God corrects him, and in his circumstance, God’s chastening corrects him: he should accept it and be ‘happy’ (אֲשֶׁרִי). It contrasts the message of Psalm 32:2, where the psalmist says that to be ‘happy’ (אֲשֶׁרִי) can be experienced by God’s choice not to chastise iniquities.

In Proverbs, when one displays particular virtues<sup>22</sup>, it makes one ‘happy’ (אֲשֶׁרִי). ‘Happy’ (אֲשֶׁרִי) in the Wisdom writings, especially in the psalms, showcases today what road to be ‘happy’ (אֲשֶׁרִי) was set before the first readers. The Wisdom writings agree to some extent (even within the book of Job) when ‘happy’ (אֲשֶׁרִי) is used when Eliphaz addresses Job in Job 5:17. Psalms assess the ‘relationship with God’ as the road that leads one to be ‘happy’ (אֲשֶׁרִי) while Proverbs has ‘virtues’ which pave the road to be ‘happy’ (אֲשֶׁרִי). Ecclesiastics only have one remark (Eccl. 10:17)<sup>23</sup> on the way to be ‘happy’ (אֲשֶׁרִי), namely, to follow the virtues of the rulers.

In Psalm 32:3, unlike in verse 2, the author specifies that ‘man or humankind’<sup>24</sup> is the recipient of this ‘blessedness’ or ‘happiness’ (אֲשֶׁרִי). When searching for a preliminary opinion on ‘humankind’ (אָדָם) in the *Psalter*, one notes that the contexts in which ‘humankind’ (אָדָם) was utilised throughout the *Psalter*. In Psalm 32:2, according to Westermann (1997a:103), denotes that ‘humankind’ (אָדָם) is ‘a mere designation of species’. A full study on the meaning and uses of ‘humankind’ (אָדָם) is a task beyond

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<sup>22</sup> Here are the virtues in Proverbs that can lead to אֲשֶׁרִי: these virtues are wisdom (3:13; 16:20), obedience (8:32; 29:18), patience (8:34), mercy (14:21), integrity (20:7) and reverence (28:14). Ecclesiastics’ one use of אֲשֶׁרִי demonstrates the virtues of the rules of the land will instil אֲשֶׁרִי in the people.

<sup>23</sup> Eccles 10:17: “Blessed are you, O land, when your king is a son of nobility and your princes feast at the proper time - to gain strength and not to get drunk.”

<sup>24</sup> אָדָם is mostly translated with “man” or “mankind”. אָדָם appears five hundred and forty-one times in the Old Testament, and in a hundred and seventy-four verses in the wisdom writings.

the scope of this study. In the *Psalter*, however, three aspects are essential when studying ‘humankind’ (אָדָם). Firstly, ‘humankind’ (אָדָם) may refer to humans<sup>25</sup>. Secondly, ‘humankind’ (אָדָם) may refer to an oppositional force<sup>26</sup>. Thirdly, like in Psalm 32, it may apply to a promise for the reader and has the same function as a pronoun<sup>27</sup>. Occurrences, where the psalm-psalmist(s) related to either the children of humankind or sons of men, were not included in the study of ‘humankind’ (אָדָם).

The significance that ‘humankind’ (אָדָם) yields in the Psalms needs to be discussed. ‘Humankind’ (אָדָם) in Psalm 32:2 may add to the understanding of man<sup>28</sup>. It demonstrates that ‘humankind’ (אָדָם) does not bear much meaning on its own and that the context in which ‘humankind’ (אָדָם) is used, seats the purpose into one of the three categories. The different settings of ‘humankind’ (אָדָם) also reflect the struggle of the first community to define the nature of man. Whenever ‘forgiveness’ is mentioned alongside ‘humankind’ (אָדָם) in the Hebrew Bible, man is seen in a positive light. The context of Psalm 32 places ‘humankind’ (אָדָם) in the third category because forgiveness is mentioned, and for that reason, ‘humankind’ (אָדָם) has a positive tone in Psalm 32:2.

The question about the nature of ‘humankind’ (אָדָם) is challenging to explain from the text of Psalm 32. Even the three categories created to improve the understanding of ‘humankind’ (אָדָם) is not a perfect model. One may then turn to the first notion in the Hebrew Bible text, as well as the first reference in the Psalms to

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<sup>25</sup> Pss 8:5; 11:4; 14:2; 22:7; 33:13; 39:6; 12; 45:3; 49:3; 53:3; 64:10; 66:5; 68:19; 76:11; 78:60; 104:14, 23; 115:16; 138:8; 144:3-4; 145:12.

<sup>26</sup> Pss 12:2, 9; 17:4; 21:11; 49:13, 21; 56:12; 57:5; 60:13; 62:10; 82:7; 89:48; 90:3; 94:10-11; 105:14; 108:13; 115:4; 116:11; 118:6; 8; 119:134; 124:2; 135:15; 140:2; 146:3.

<sup>27</sup> The third type of occurrence of אָדָם is the least common with fourteen appearances in the Psalms (Pss 31:20; 32:2; 36:7, 8; 58:2, 12; 73:5; 80:18; 84:6; 13; 107:8; 15, 21, 31).

enhance understanding. When first mentioned in the Hebrew Bible (Gen 1:26-27<sup>29</sup>), the nature of ‘humankind’ (אָדָם) is explained.<sup>30</sup>

The question now arises if all further appearances of ‘humankind’ (אָדָם) are understood by the primary audience like Genesis 1:26-27 explains it? If later Hebrew Bible text contradict these texts, the Genesis 1:26-27 could still aid in explaining ‘humankind’ (אָדָם) as the first mention of ‘humankind’ (אָדָם) in the Hebrew text.

In Psalm 8:4-6. ‘humankind’ (אָדָם) is utilised for the first time, while the significance correlates closely with that of Genesis 1:26-27. As the mention of ‘humankind’ (אָדָם) in Genesis 1:26-27 sets the tone for the understanding of ‘humankind’ (אָדָם) in the Hebrew Bible, ‘humankind’ (אָדָם) in Psalm 8:4-6<sup>31</sup> sets the tone for its insight into the *Psalter*.

The next conditional clause is central to the hypothesis of this study. ‘Humankind’ (אָדָם) may truly be ‘happy’ or ‘blessed’ (אַשְׁרֵי) if the following phrase is valid: ‘YHWH does not impute iniquity’ (לֹא יַחְשֵׁב יְהוָה לִּי עֲוֹן).

אֵל<sup>32</sup>, in this instance, may reveal that God is prohibiting to impute sin. If this is true, the translation might read: ‘Blessed [is] the man unto whom the LORD *should not* impute iniquity, and in whose spirit [there is] no guilt’.

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<sup>29</sup> Gen 1:26-27: “And God said, "Let us make humankind in our image and according to our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of heaven, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every moving thing that moves upon the earth." 27 So God created humankind in his image, in the likeness of God he created him, male and female he created them. .”

<sup>30</sup> ‘Humankind’ (אָדָם) is explained in Gen 1:26-27 due to God that created ‘humankind’ (אָדָם) in his image, and thus the image of ‘humankind’ (אָדָם) was created positive by YHWH.

<sup>31</sup> Ps 8:4-6: [W]hat is a human being that you think of him? and a child of humankind that you care for him? 5 And you made him a little lower than heavenly beings, and with glory and with majesty you crowned him. 6 You make him over the works of your hands; all things you have placed under his feet:

<sup>32</sup> אֵל is defined as “not”. There are different clauses that אֵל is found in, for e.g. אֵל can be found in predications. According to Whitaker, et al. (1906). אֵל can either be utilized with a verb or with adjectives (or substantives). In this passage, אֵל is be found with a verb. These verbs are often infinite tenses, whether imperfect or perfect. Like mentioned earlier, יַחְשֵׁב is in the Qal imperfect 3<sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular. Other places where אֵל appears is in short circumstantial clauses and with a final

אֵל is followed by יַחֲשֹׁב in Psalm 32:2. יַחֲשֹׁב is not a word that necessarily caused fear among the first readers. The term ignited fear when it is utilised in conjunction with ‘iniquity’ (עֲוֹן). The root of יַחֲשֹׁב is חָשַׁב and is translated<sup>33</sup> as ‘to think’ or ‘to account’<sup>34</sup> (Jenni & Westermann, 1997:631).

‘Thoughts’ (יַחֲשֹׁב)<sup>35</sup> in which God plans for his people are exhibited in detail in Jeremiah 29:11<sup>36</sup>.

The next character introduced in Psalm 32, who determines the splendour of forgiveness, as He is the agent of forgiveness, is יְהוָה. Yahweh is the proper name of the God of Israel, according to Whitaker et al. (1906). These scholars explain that the ‘pronunciation Jehovah was unknown until 1520 when Galatinus introduced it; but it was contested by Le Mercier, J. Drusius, and L. Capellus, as against grammatical and historical propriety.’ Whitaker et al. (1906) continue to say that most variations favour the spelling as יְהוָה. He argues that some current scholars explain יְהוָה as Hiph’il of הוה, namely the one bringing into being, or origin of life (see הָיָה in Gen 3:20). When argued from the standpoint that part of God’s character is ‘giver of life’, this agrees with the first statement both in Genesis and in the Psalms about ‘humankind’ (אָדָם). ‘Humankind’ (אָדָם) was created ‘in the image’ (בְּצַלְמֵךְ) of YHWH (יְהוָה) by YHWH (יְהוָה). It means that YHWH (יְהוָה) is the ‘existence’ or ‘life’ (הָיָה) of the ‘humankind’ (אָדָם). Thus, even though the connection between יְהוָה and הָיָה may not exist existentially, it exists functionally.

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force. Whitaker, et al. (1906) notes that אֵל denotes prohibition when in conjunction with an imperfect verb.

<sup>33</sup> יַחֲשֹׁב can be translated, according to Strong (1890) “he regards, values, conceives, considers, counts, devises, esteems, finds out, forecasts, holds, imagines, imputes, invents, means, purposes, reckons, regards or thinks.”

<sup>34</sup> 2 Sam 19:20 and Ps 32:2 both translates יַחֲשֹׁב as “reckon” or “count”.

<sup>35</sup> There are only fifteen instances where יַחֲשֹׁב is negative by אֵל: Gen 31:15; Lev 7:18; Num 23:9; 1 Kgs 10:21; 2 Kgs 12:16; 22:7; Ps 32:2; 35:20; Isa 10:7; 13:17; 29:17; 33:8; 53:3; Jer 11:19; 18:18.

<sup>36</sup> Jer 29:11: For I know the plans that I am planning concerning you,' declares YHWH, 'plans for prosperity and not for harm, to give to you a future and a hope.



In the context of Psalm 32, the character of יְהוָה does not follow the same logic as in Genesis 3:20. In Psalm 32, אֲשֶׁרִי can be expected when יְהוָה does not impute iniquity on humankind's life. With the character of יְהוָה in mind, there can be two ways in which this sentence might have been understood. 'To be happy' (אֲשֶׁרִי) will follow when 'YHWH' (יְהוָה) does not impute iniquity, because, firstly, it means then that 'humankind' (אָדָם) has to deal with 'YHWH' (יְהוָה) who provides life rather than imputes iniquity; and secondly, the psalmist does not understand the nature and character of 'YHWH' (יְהוָה) as life-giver; and thirdly, 'YHWH's' (יְהוָה) character of life-giving includes assigning iniquity to correct people, like Eliphaz erroneously remarked in Job. Finally, the first part of Psalm 32:2 can be considered as a mirror of the second part of Psalm 32:2: 'and in whose spirit is no deceit.'

וְאֵין בְּרוּחוֹ רְמִיָּה:

and in whose spirit there is no deceit.

'Without' (וְאֵין) specifically in Psalm 32 denotes a simple genitive relation (Koehler & Baumgartner, 2000a:321). Something to note about the phrase: בְּרוּחוֹ רְמִיָּה (and in whose spirit there is no deceit) is what Snyman (2004:158) comments: 'The phrase is sometimes regarded as a possible addition to the text. There is, however, no manuscript evidence that supports the omission of the phrase. The Greek translation (LXX) also reads 'in his mouth' instead of 'in his spirit' in the case of the phrase וְאֵין בְּרוּחוֹ רְמִיָּה. If one were to accept the reading of the Septuagint, it would amount to a changing of the consonant text from בְּרִיטוֹ בְּרוּחוֹ, something usually avoided. The Syrian translation reads בְּלִבּוֹ as 'in his heart', also a deviation from the consonant text, without any textual evidence.' Kirkpatrick (1921:162) uses this phrase to underline the importance of sincerity as a condition needed for a man to receive forgiveness. Bullock (2018:143) rightly increases the focus on divine forgiveness.

לְּ in verse 2 opens the opportunity to see this text in a different light<sup>37</sup>. Though God is set to impute iniquity, the psalmist utilised לְּ instead of a preposition like אֶל. אֶל 'localises the goal of a movement or process (usually concerning a specific person or place).' The choice to utilise לְּ brought uncertainty into the text that would not exist otherwise. The difficulty showcased using לְּ is a ploy from the psalmist to avoid adding dubious aspects to the character of 'YHWH' (יְהוָה).

On the one hand, the author avoids being too precise about if 'YHWH' (יְהוָה) causes iniquity in people's lives, on the other hand, the psalmist do want to offer 'YHWH' (יְהוָה) the glory if there is not any 'iniquity' (עֲוֹן) in someone's life. The choice to use לְּ instead of the preposition אֶל might be the same reason why the second part of the verse rhymes with the second part of Psalm 32:9. This second part of Psalm 32:9 helps the reader to understand and to fill in gaps in understanding the statement in the first half of Psalm 32:2 (as is shown in Table 1.1)

The question is posed why the author utilised עֲוֹנוֹת instead of עֲוֹן<sup>38</sup>. If the psalmist indeed only talks about one iniquity, there are a few considerations: Firstly, the psalmist sees several iniquities of humankind as one great iniquity, for example, the iniquity of human nature. Secondly, the psalmist focuses on one iniquity, and in the context of Psalm 32, it might mean that 'humankind' (אָדָם) should be 'happy' (אֲשֵׁרִי) every time his 'iniquity' (עֲוֹן) is not 'ascribed' (יְחָשֵׁב) to him. Thirdly the psalmist was using poetic devices to keep the number of עֲוֹן the same as אָדָם, although (so the psalmist might have argued) both refer to a large number and that the first readers

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<sup>37</sup> לְּ is the preposition לְּ with the pronominal suffix in the third masculine singular form. This preposition has an unspecialised meaning and it indicates a general relationship between entities. Way to describe the meaning is at best: "x as far as y is concerned". In Psalm 32 the words that are connected by לְּ is אָדָם, יְהוָה, עֲוֹן and יְחָשֵׁב. Following the definition, the translation reads: YHWH imputes iniquity "as far as mankind" is concerned.

<sup>38</sup> עֲוֹן has the root of עוה which means "iniquity, guilt or punishment of iniquity." עֲוֹן is masculine and singular. The gender of the word does not affect translation or meaning. The number of עֲוֹן is noteworthy.

might assume this detail. The third option might be plausible, but perhaps there is a fourth option, namely that all three options are correct, depending on how the reader study the prism of the meaning of ‘iniquity’ (עוֹן).

Snyman (2004:159) studied different texts. He suggests that the concept of ‘my iniquities (plural) should be changed to ‘my iniquity’ (singular).’ Furthermore, it is better to retain the Masoretic text in this instance, as the context makes it clear that more than one transgression is at stake here. Snyman adds a fifth option to the above options on how to understand ‘iniquity’ (עוֹן). וְאֵין is translated as ‘and not’.<sup>39</sup>

וְאֵין<sup>40</sup> appears twice in Psalm 32. וְאֵין is preceding a infinitive, and means ‘without understanding’ (Koehler & Baumgartner, 2000a:322). In Psalm 32:2, it refers to the absence of ‘deceit’ (רַמְיָה) in ‘spirit’ (רוּחַ), and Psalm 32:9 relates to the lack of ‘understanding’ (בִּינָה) in the ‘horse’ (סוּס) or ‘mule’ (פָּרָד). Could ‘without’ (וְאֵין) form somewhat significant rhyme in the psalm, and be utilised as a poetic device to link the meaning of verse 2 and nine?

The psalmist uses both verses to denote something that does not belong. The spirit of man should be without guile and filled with understanding. The following question arises: if the psalmist is pitting ‘deceit’ (רַמְיָה) and ‘understanding’ (בִּינָה) as opposites, is that apparent of their culture? Another issue that arises is that if a person with no ‘understanding’ (בִּינָה) only expect ‘deceit’ (רַמְיָה) and one might be tempted to ask, ‘understanding’ (בִּינָה) of what?

In Table 1.1, the similarity between Psalm 32:2 and Psalm 32:9 is demonstrated. The correlation between Psalm 32:2 and Psalm 32:9 can be written as ‘abcd acbd’ in terms of meaning and function in the psalm. In Table 1.1, there is one assumption made, namely that ‘impute’ (יִחַשֵׁב) has two subjects. There are thus two

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<sup>39</sup> The *waw* simply means “and”. If the *waw* was directly joined to a finite verb it could have two functions - *waw*-consecutive or *waw*-copulative. Since וְאֵין contains a *waw* plus an adverb, this does not apply.

<sup>40</sup> וְאֵין can be defined as a particle of negation, and can be translated as “is not”, “are not”, “was not” or “were not”.

details that are ‘imputed’ (יִחָשֵׁב), namely ‘iniquity’ (עוֹן) and ‘deceit’ (רַמְיָה). This structure finds its evidence in Psalm 32:9, where a similar structure appears (see Table 1.1).

‘Imputed’ (יִחָשֵׁב) and ‘become’ (תִּהְיֶה) expresses, thus, the same function in this verse. Both words are found in the Qal Imperfect. The difference between the two, however: ‘YHWH’ (יְהוָה) is the subject of ‘imputed’ (יִחָשֵׁב), and ‘humankind’ (אָדָם) is the subject of ‘is covered’ (תִּהְיֶה). Both terms are utilised along with a negative.

Furthermore, ‘and nothing’ (וְאֵין) in Psalm 32:2 and ‘nothing’ (אֵין) in 32:9 both denotes the absence of something. In Psalm 32:2, ‘and nothing’ (וְאֵין) denotes the absence of ‘deceit’ (רַמְיָה) in the ‘spirit’ (בְּרוּחֹו). In Psalm 32:9, ‘nothing’ (אֵין) denotes the lack of ‘understanding’ (הִבְיֵן) ‘like a horse’ (בְּסוּס) or ‘like a mule’ (בְּפָרֶד).

Furthermore, the similarities between ‘in whose spirit’ (בְּרוּחֹו) (v. 2) and ‘like a horse’ (בְּסוּס) and ‘like a mule’ (בְּפָרֶד) (v. 9) both start with a preposition. Lastly, there are not striking similarities between these two words. Their meaning and type differ. Poetically they also function differently. ‘Deceit’ (רַמְיָה) is something that one does not want, while ‘understanding’ (הִבְיֵן) is something sought after in that culture. The author of the psalms knew that the readers would want to avoid ‘deceit’ (רַמְיָה) and strives to acquire ‘understanding’ (וְהִבְיֵן).<sup>41</sup> Wisdom literature uses knowledge, understanding and seeking wisdom as synonyms, for example, in Proverbs 2:4-5:

*[4] and if you look for it [wisdom] as for silver  
and search for it [wisdom] as for hidden treasure,  
[5] then you will understand the fear of the Lord  
and find the knowledge of God.*

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<sup>41</sup> As expected, appears הִבְיֵן eighty times in wisdom literature, twenty-six times in the Psalms, but thirty times in Proverbs.

‘Deceit’ (רַמְיָה), however, is not a word frequently found in the Old Testament. It is utilised the first time by Job, when he addresses his friends, asking them rather to keep quiet, as remaining silent will be counted towards them as wisdom (Job 13:5). And as they speak, they are letting God hear ‘deceit’ (רַמְיָה). Once again, one of the words of Psalm 32 appears in wisdom literature, which strengthens the argument that Psalm 32 contains a wisdom element. In another study by Botha (2014:1-9) Psalm 32 is compared to Proverbs 28 to show that ‘it was devised from the beginning as a wisdom-teaching psalm although it simulates the form of a psalm of thanksgiving in certain respects’ (Botha, 2014:1).

‘Deceit’ (רַמְיָה), appears twice in Job, once in every book of the psalms, twice in book five, and four times in Proverbs. The other three times ‘deceit’ (רַמְיָה) is found in the Hebrew Bible is once in Jeremiah, Hosea and Micah, increasing the total use of ‘deceit’ (רַמְיָה) to fifteen (Strong’s, 1890).

רוּחַ<sup>42</sup> is a word utilised interchangeably to mean ‘breath,’ ‘wind’ and ‘spirit.’ When רוּחַ is translated with ‘spirit,’ a troubled spirit of man (Gen 41:8)<sup>43</sup>, a spirit of wisdom (Exod 28:3)<sup>44</sup> and the spirit of jealousy (Num 5:14).<sup>45</sup> ‘Spirit’ (רוּחַ), on the other hand, appears more in the wisdom literature and prophets than in the Pentateuch and Historical Books. It occurs mostly in Isaiah, followed by Ezekiel, and then the Psalms.

The appearances of ‘spirit’ (רוּחַ)<sup>46</sup> are more than twice in the Psalms than in any other book in the Hebrew Bible. The reason for this might be that ‘spirit’ (רוּחַ) has diverse meanings and diverse poetic functions.

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<sup>42</sup> בְּרוּחוֹ contains an inseparable preposition בְּ, the noun רוּחַ in the form male or female, singular and the suffix, third person, masculine and singular.

<sup>43</sup> Gen 41:8: And it happened that in the morning his spirit was troubled, and he sent and called all of the magicians of Egypt, and all its wise men, and Pharaoh told his dream to them. But [they had no interpretation] for Pharaoh.

<sup>44</sup> Exod 28:3: And you will speak to all the skilled of heart, whom I have given [a gift of skill], and they will make the garments of Aaron to consecrate him for his serving as my priest.

<sup>45</sup> Num 5:14: if a spirit of jealousy comes over him, and he is jealous of his wife and she is defiled; or if a spirit of jealousy comes over him and he is jealous of his wife but she is not defiled.

<sup>46</sup> רוּחַ is found in Pss: 31; 32; 34; 51; 76; 77; 78; 104; 106; 139; 142 and 143. In a total of twelve Psalms, רוּחַ appears thirty-six times. רוּחַ appears in one hundred and thirty one verses, and one

Keeping the amount of appearances of ‘spirit’ (רוּחַ) in mind, one sees that the term in Psalm 32:2 is translated in the LEB as ‘spirit’ and that this ‘spirit’ (רוּחַ) belongs to ‘humankind’ (אָדָם). This translation and understanding might be closer to a modern interpretation of ‘spirit’ (רוּחַ) and the understanding of wisdom literature. Psalm 32 is close to wisdom literature in its metaphorical use of words.

‘Deceit’ (רָמְיָה) <sup>47</sup> is not often found in the Hebrew Bible, and only appears in the wisdom literature and the prophets, with an occurrence of fifteen times. Job explains that he will not speak ‘deceit’ (רָמְיָה) about God, as Satan suggested (Job 1:11) and his wife (Job 2:9). After Job’s friends spoke about his situation and scorning him, he replied (Job 13:7) and said he would not talk ‘deceit’ (רָמְיָה) about God. Job reckons that the details he is hearing from his counsel, his friends, is not something that God would say. He repeats this comment later (Job 27:4). רָמְיָה is translated with ‘deceit’ <sup>48</sup>, ‘false’ or ‘lazy’. When this definition of deceit is linked to the understanding of how Job

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hundred and forty-three times in the wisdom literature. רוּחַ is mostly translated with “spirit”, but it can also be translated with “wind”. “Breath” is sometimes the translation of רוּחַ. A smaller portion of the translated options is divided between “side”, “mind”, “blast”, “whirlwind” and “tempest”.

Focusing on the most common translation of רוּחַ, “spirit”, “wind” and “breath”, the question arises if these three words occur more, or less often in the first book of the Psalms, and in the larger *Psalter* than in the rest of the wisdom literature.

רוּחַ appears forty-six times in the *Psalter*. Only 2.2% of the appearances are רוּחַ not translated with “spirit”, “wind” or “breath”. This illustrates the common way to translate רוּחַ is even more common in the *Psalter*. Turning the focus to the first book of the Psalms, the term רוּחַ is translated in line with the rest of the *Psalter*. In Book I of the Psalms, “spirit”, “wind” and “breath” is the preferred choice for the translation of רוּחַ, except for 7.7% of the times. This means the three most common choices of translation are exactly equal to the median of the *Psalter*, 7.7%. One anomaly in Book I is “wind” is more commonly the preferred translation of the word רוּחַ than in the rest of the Wisdom literature, but less common than in the rest of the *Psalter*. “Wind” is the preferred choice of translation. Another small anomaly is “Spirit” is the preferred choice of translation. This phenomenon brings one to the audience and the Sitz im Leben of the *Psalter* and the wisdom literature. The wisdom literature was written in a context where the understanding of רוּחַ was often found on the side of “spirit”, but in the *Psalter*, especially Book I of the *Psalter*, the understanding of רוּחַ is at best only translated half of the time with “spirit”.

<sup>47</sup> רָמְיָה has a female singular form, and according to Whitaker, et al. (1906) means “deceit” or “treachery”, and especially in Psalm 32:2 it means “deception”. It stems from the root רָמָה a verb usually found in the Pi’el and means to beguile or to deal treacherously with someone.

<sup>48</sup> Deceit is defined according to the Webster dictionary as “the act of causing someone to accept as true or valid what is false or invalid”, “the act or practice of deceiving” or “deception achieving one’s goals through a web of deceit” (Merriam-Webster, 2019).

utilised 'deceit' (רַמְיָה), the term can be understood as: 'the act of causing someone to accept as true or valid that which is false or invalid about YHWH.' When this understanding is linked to Psalm 32:2, someone may experience 'forgiveness' (אִשְׁרִי) when there is no 'deceit' (רַמְיָה) about who YHWH is.

### 2.3.3.3. Agony without forgiveness (Ps 3a-4k)

Psalm 32:3a-4k is seen here as showcasing the agony that exists without forgiveness. This passage idiomatically reads as follows:

*When I was caused to be silent, my bones wore out  
[my bones wore out] through my roaring all day.  
For day and night, your hand was heavy on me:  
[For day and night] it turned my vitality into the drought of summer. Selah*

Now that the splendour of forgiveness has been discussed, the psalmist contrasts this excitement, with his/her demise. Lawrence (1996:805) argues that verse 4 suggests that God's judgement according to 'the impression of vv. 3-4, is that the real problem is not God's wrath but the psalmist's silence.' In this part of the study, however, it becomes clear how metaphors play an essential role in the understanding of the text. Studying the literal and symbolic meanings of some words, as well as their stems and occurrences, reveal the deep sense of agony that the psalmist experiences without forgiveness. Kirkpatrick (1921:161) summarises this text unit in which the author refuses to confess his sins, and experiences inward torture from realising his guilt. This torture continues until he is forgiven (v. 5). This study, however, argues that the author was not only a passive recipient of torture, as there is evidence that the poet attempted actions to take this feeling of torture away, but that only the acceptance of the splendour of forgiveness took away the sense of pain, and that the confession of sin only started the process of forgiveness (Bullock, 2018:143).

The text (Ps 32:3a-4k) is divided into two units, namely, verse 3 and 4. Verse 3 has two conditional clauses ('When I was caused to be silent, my bones worn out' and '[my bones wore out] through my roaring all day'). 'My bones wore out' (בָּלוּ עַצְמִי) is assumed in the second line, to avoid a decision to determine to which phrase 'my bones wore out' applies. 'My bones wore out' (בָּלוּ עַצְמִי) serves as the incident that is explained by 'due to my groaning all the day'.

The poet here shows artistry. The 'Maskil' of the poet is not only a chore but a piece of art that he/she uses to underline just how much his/her bones are worn out. The poet used a logical order to write this 'Maskil', and this deviation highlights a key element, namely that the second time that the poet attempted to mention 'worn-out bones', the bones weren't even present anymore.

Verse 4 builds on this idea and elaborates on the extent to which 'my bones wore out' (בָּלוּ עַצְמִי). Verse 4 starts with a temporal adverbial clause of 'was heavy' (תִּכְבֵּד). The poet expresses this personal experience by using the personal pronoun suffix twice (לְשִׁדִּי and עָלַי). In verse 4, the first occurrence of the second person suffix is used (נִהַפְּדֶה), introducing a dialogue into the 'Maskil'. As in verse 3, the poet once more left out an intended part of the second line of verse 4: 'for day and night' (וּלְיָמָה). (כִּי יוֹמָם).

כִּי־הִחַרְשִׁיתִי בָּלוּ עַצְמִי

When I was caused to be silent, my bones wore out

כִּי is translated in three different ways: firstly, as 'that'; secondly to denote time like 'when'; and thirdly as 'because' or 'since'. Verse 3 starts with כִּי, and in this context, it indicates time, as Whitaker *et al.* (1906:1150) argue, especially past tense. It creates the setting of the sentence that follows: the poet is about to share something that has happened in his/her life, or the psalmist is about to share a known outcome of a hypothetical situation. In Psalm 32:3, the psalmist 'followed כִּי<sup>49</sup> with personal information about what happened at a time that he/she tried to 'caused to be silent' (הִחַרְשִׁיתִי).

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<sup>49</sup> כִּי is a common word throughout the Hebrew Bible, with more than four thousand four hundred appearances. Appearances of כִּי do not have value in and of itself for this study.



“Silence is the opposite of confession of sin for the sinful psalmists” (Delcor, 1997:631). When studying the translation of **הָרַשׁ** (the stem of **הִתְרַשְׁתִּי**<sup>50</sup>) in the King James translation, it is translated mostly as ‘peace’ and secondly as ‘plough’. The other words used to explain ‘peace’ (**הָרַשׁ**) all appears five times or fewer in the Hebrew Bible. Accurately, in the Psalms, however, **הָרַשׁ** is most translated as ‘silence’ followed by ‘silent’.<sup>51</sup> As was the case with ‘spirit’ (**רוּחַ**), using ‘peace’ (**הָרַשׁ**) is not consistent with the number, it has the same meaning. The primary audience to this text could understand **הָרַשׁ** to mean ‘peace’ generally in the Hebrew Bible, and to mean ‘silent’ or ‘silence’ specifically in the Psalms. How this should be interpreted is debatable.

A few possibilities come to mind: One, the reader may see ‘silence’ and ‘peace’ as synonyms. Two, the reader may see ‘silence’ as the Hiph’il of ‘peace’, thus: silence is when peace is caused, and in a way forced. Three, ‘peace’ is the preferred translation in the psalms (18.18%), the same as ‘silent’, which means that the readers were familiar with the other uses of **הָרַשׁ**. Thus, there may have been a purpose for using ‘peace’ (**הָרַשׁ**) as ‘silence’ (**הִתְרַשְׁתִּי**). The psalmist did not use ‘peace’ (**הָרַשׁ**) in any other form except in the Hiph’il form in this psalm. Considering option two, one see how the psalmist might have extensive knowledge of **הָרַשׁ** and that the Hiph’il form of this verb expresses what the poet indented. It means option two is correct and provides the first reader insight into understanding this type of silence. The poet might have known a few other words that could convey the same meaning of ‘silence’, but

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<sup>50</sup> **הִתְרַשְׁתִּי** is found in the Hiph’il first person singular form and can be translated as “caused to worn out” because Hiph’il denotes cause. Furthermore, the phrase is from the base **הָרַשׁ** which literary mean to “cut in”, “engrave”, “till” or “devise” according to Whitaker, et al. (1906). Delcor (1997:630) confirms that ‘the Hiph’il causative meaning [is] “to silence”’. Delcor (1997:628) also translate **הָרַשׁ** as ‘to be deaf, dumb’ when used in the Qal form. **הִתְרַשְׁתִּי** should use the Hiph’il form, as any other form differs in meaning. Thus, the reason the poet chose Hiph’il form is not to change the meaning necessarily to add the meaning of “cause” to the word, but to use the intended meaning for this context.

<sup>51</sup> When studying the use of **הָרַשׁ** in the Psalms, **הָרַשׁ** is translated as “silence” 36.36% of the eleven times it appears, and 18.18% of the times it appears in the King James it is translated as “silent”. This makes “silence” or “silent” the preferred way to translate **הָרַשׁ** 54.55% of the 11 times.

instead, he chose a word that means ‘plough’ and ‘peace’ and only in the Hiph’il changes to ‘silence’.

To summarise, the poet used **הַחֲרִישָׁתִי** with a purpose. **חָרַשׁ** embeds the meaning of ‘plough’ and ‘peace’ alongside ‘silence’ to convey a sense that the first audience might have understood. He further used Hiph’il-form to change the definition to silence, and the first reader might easier see the picture of forced (or caused) ‘peace,’ like a plough.

**בָּלָו**<sup>52</sup> is a verb, in Qal perfect, third-person plural of the word: בלה. It has four possible meanings: ‘to be used up’, ‘to be worn out’, ‘to consume’ or ‘to enjoy’ (Whitaker *et al.*, 1906). The fourth meaning (‘to enjoy’) varies considerably from the first three possible meanings. How does one reconcile these four meanings? Why is this discrepancy found in the Hebrew text? Do the four different meanings form part of synonyms in the Hebrew language? If so, do the different meanings indicate to the modern reader something about the worldview of this time? Another viewpoint might suggest that the four different meanings refer to the world from the psalmist’s perspective. For instance, when someone delivers a speech, his act of providing that speech might be enjoyed by the audience, but the person delivering it might feel worn out. Thus, ‘to be worn out’ and ‘to be enjoyed’ are not mutually exclusive, but can both be true, depending on which viewpoint one takes. In this context, the psalmist does not refer to ‘my bones’ (**עֲצָמַי**) suffering from war or sickness, instead, that ‘my bones’ (**עֲצָמַי**) are ‘used up’, ‘worn out’, ‘consumed’ or ‘enjoyed’ (**בָּלָו**). Koehler & Baumgartner (2000c:492) correctly adds the translation: ‘bones become brittle’. In summary, his/her bones are the subject that ‘groans’ (**בָּלָו**), along with the nuance of enjoyment contained ‘in his/her bones’ (**בָּלָו**). In a modern-day translation, this nuance is difficult to translate.

The vanity of enjoyment is at the heart of the meaning of this word and is translated accordingly throughout the Hebrew Scriptures.

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<sup>52</sup> The root, בלה is used three hundred and twelve times in the Hebrew Bible and is used mostly as **בְּלֹתִי** that can be translated as “not” or “without”. **בְּלֹתִי** is used one hundred and twelve times, compared to the sixteen uses of בלה.

When עֲצָמָי<sup>53</sup> is used in the wisdom literature, it refers either to one's entire body, of the deepest part of one's being, or one's 'core'. When seen in the context of verse 3, the primary readers of this text might have understood the term 'as the deepest part of their being' (their bones, but metaphorically their spirit). The early readers would read this enjoyment differently, as the word is intended to mean a significant amount of pleasure that will lead to the wearing out of one's being. This understanding that the first readers might have had, for the culture and rich vocabulary, might provide this study new insights into how forgiveness might function. Suddenly the forgiveness of sins helps the reader to deal with an internal feeling, and experience, rather than with an outside effect that sin might have caused. It might stand in contrast to an idea present in the culture that sin can only be a sin when caught out. Thus, the community knew about it, and therefore God knew about it. It is because the idea that God is omnipresent was not actively present in that culture. The reader is describing a fresh concept in this psalm that sin causes harm within people's beings, the deepest part of them within when it is not confessed. It wastes away the bones or the inside of the body. And the remedy that the psalmist suggests for this problem is not to 'plough' 'silence', as discussed in the previous paragraphs. The first community was advised to speak about their sins, and not to force silence upon themselves as a plough needs to be forced to stay in the ground.

בְּשִׂאֲגָתִי כָּל־הַיּוֹם:

[my bones were worn out] due to my groaning all the day.

The root of שִׂאֲגָת<sup>54</sup> in Psalm 32:3 is שִׂאֲגָה, and can translate as 'groaning' (LEB) or 'roaring' (KJV). In the previous few paragraphs, the idea was followed as the poet wrote it for the first community. To provide a reason for the 'forced' silence in the deepest part of his being, and that is שִׂאֲגָתִי. Thus, שִׂאֲגָתִי functions in a more

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<sup>53</sup> עֲצָמָי is the plural feminine of עֲצָמָה with the first person singular suffix, and can be translated as "my bones". עֲצָמָה is a common word used to translate "bone" or "skeleton". In its plural form, it might also mean "limbs". It may also be translated as a metaphor for one's "body". appears in most of the books of the Hebrew Bible, and forty-five times in the wisdom literature.

<sup>54</sup> The pronoun, אֲנִי, means in, at, among, upon, with, away from or when. The suffix is a pronoun, first person singular, which translates as "me". This noun only appears in Job (twice), the Psalms (twice), Isaiah (once), Ezekiel (once) and Zachariah (once). בְּשִׂאֲגָתִי consists of a pronoun, a noun and a suffix. The noun, שִׂאֲגָה, in a singular feminine form, has a more defined meaning, either "roaring" or "screaming".

substantial way. The term שָׁאָגַת often appears in the Hebrew Bible, in wisdom literature and the prophets. The phrase is mostly used as a metaphor for help or refer to the ‘roar of a lion,’ that might depict a loud sound. In the context of the broader wisdom literature the author’s reason for the ‘forced’ silence in the deepest part of their being, is either a call for help or his ‘groaning’ (roaring) like a lion. ‘Groaning’ (שָׁאָגַת) is used twice in the psalms (Pss 22:1 and 32:3), and both times means ‘groaning.’ It makes the call for help in the psalm-context more likely. The psalmist uttered the first part of this sentence negatively. Thus, ‘groaning’ (שָׁאָגַת) had a negative consequence. To highlight the understanding of forgiveness in this psalm, one could say that ‘groaning’ (שָׁאָגַת) prevents forgiveness. The sentence ends with the juxtaposition between keeping silent (but not excepting help) and roaring like a lion (to demonstrate the severity of outcry of pain). The psalmist understood the negative impact of remaining silent about sin and groaning all day on their bodies.

What is interesting about using the term ‘groaning’, is that it seemed like a contrast to keeping silent. It illustrates the first audience did not perceive a distinction between ‘silence’ and ‘roaring’. In the mind of the first audience, they might have recognised the meaning of the word outside of its common understanding. The primary audience understood what the consequences and circumstances of every word usually are. The psalmist then uses this *a priori* information to convey his/her message. His lack of confession (silence) led to his inner/bodily deterioration. You achieve this by continuous groaning (crying).

The next phrase in verse 3, כָּל-הַיּוֹם,<sup>55</sup> adds a time dimension. הַיּוֹם is translated as ‘the day’. The oxymoron in the rest of this sentence is to be described as something that happens the whole of ‘the day’. When הַיּוֹם and כָּל are found in conjunction, it is usually translated as ‘daily’ or ‘the day’. In this context, ‘daily’ might

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<sup>55</sup> כָּל is a noun, singular meaning “all”, “the whole” or “total” (Whitaker *et al.*, 1906). It occurs frequently in the Psalms; three hundred and fifty times in the Psalms.

be an ideal translation of the word יום<sup>56</sup> and is one of the common words to denote time in the Hebrew Bible. In this verse, יום is used to demonstrate the repetitive nature of the שָׁאָגָה (groaning). Continuous (daily) groaning led to inner/bodily deterioration.

כִּי יוֹמָם וְלַיְלָה תִּכְבֵּד עָלַי יָדְךָ

For day and night, your hand was heavy upon me.

In verse 4, כִּי<sup>57</sup> is a causal conjunction. Conjunctions connect paragraphs, sentences, phrases or words. In verse 4, כִּי expresses a result, and this preposition links verses 3 and 4. In the previous section, the cause for the worn-out bones was the groaning. This verse starts with כִּי, taking the chain of causes further. Here the psalmist expresses the fact that the 'heavy hand of the Lord' was upon him/her as the reason for the groaning. The poet uses this verse to end the description of the negative feeling he experienced and serves as the result of verse 1 and 2. The next verse, verse 5, describes the results of his/her changed approach to the feeling of guilt. It is the second and last time כִּי is used in Psalm 32. The first time (in v. 3) the psalmist used כִּי as a warning and introduced this personal experience. Here the psalmist used כִּי to change from a pleasant setting to a negative context. The event continues, while the environment stays negative. The Hebrew poetry dictates that important concepts are repeated to highlight what the psalmist tried to convey. Therefore, verses 3 and 4 mirrors each other as Table 1.2 illustrates:

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<sup>56</sup> יום is found two thousand two hundred and eighty-four times in the Hebrew Bible.

<sup>57</sup> כִּי appears more than four thousand times in the Hebrew Bible, four thousand two hundred and forty times to be exact.

Psalm 32:3	Psalm 32:4
כִּי (when)	כִּי (for)
הִחַרְשֵׁתִי (I kept silence)	יוֹמָם (day)
בָּלוּ (worn out)	וְלַיְלָה (and night)
עֲצָמָי (my bones)	תִּכְבֵּד (was heavy)
בְּשִׁאֲגוֹתַי (through my roaring)	עָלַי (upon me)
כָּל- (all)	יָדְךָ (your hand)
הַיּוֹם (the day)	נִהְפָּךְ (is turned)
	לְשִׁדְּי (my moisture)
	בְּחִרְבֵּנִי (into the drought)
	קִיץ (of summer)
	סֵלָה (Selah)

Table 1.2

Table 1.2 assumed that the psalmist was writing Hebrew wisdom literature while following rules that applied to Israelite culture and history. If Table 1.2 is understood in the Israelite context, the similarities are striking. Both verses start with כִּי, which guided the results described in these two sentences. As the כִּי participle links words, sentences, phrases or paragraphs, that function is fulfilled at the beginning of verse 3. Verse 3 is linked to verse 2 by using כִּי. The exciting part arises when verse 4 starts with the same conjunction. It indicated that verse 4 is a repeated follow up on verse 3, to highlight the meaning of verse 3. When one investigates the links created by the כִּי participle, the extra meaning is added to the original sentence. As verse 4 is analysed, meaning (as is described in the following paragraphs) is added.

In verse 4, יוֹמָם is translated as 'daily'. In this verse, it is found as an adverb, telling more about 'was heavy' (תִּכְבֵּד). In this sentence, 'daily' (יוֹמָם) tells the reader about the duration of 'was heavy' (תִּכְבֵּד). 'Daily' (יוֹמָם) has the same stem as יוֹם in verse 3. The difference here is, where יוֹם was at the end of the verse, guiding the reader to the final climax of his statement. The psalmist ends this statement with כָּל- הַיּוֹם, suggesting that the experience alone was not enough and that his experience continued 'daily'. In verse 4, the psalmist starts with this concept of continuation. The

phrases  $\text{כָּל־הַיּוֹם}$  and  $\text{יוֹמָם}$  functions as poetic conjunction between these verses. Notably, this contrast appears only once outside the wisdom literature, namely in Job 5:14. In Table 1.2, ‘all day’ is compared to ‘day and night’, to illustrate how the suffering is described as a continuous state. While  $\text{כָּל־הַיּוֹם}$  is easily identified as a marker of continued action, it sheds light on the meaning and reason for the use of  $\text{יוֹמָם}$  and  $\text{לַיְלָה}$  (day and night).

$\text{וְלַיְלָה}$ <sup>58</sup> is translated as ‘and night’.  $\text{יוֹמָם}$  and  $\text{לַיְלָה}$  appear together in some psalms<sup>59</sup> and forms a Hebrew *hendiadys*. The meaning denotes a consistency: ‘always’. Night-time was a time of heightened danger and vulnerability (e.g. Ps 104:20: ‘You make darkness, and it is night when all the animals of the forest creep about.’). This vulnerability, however, gave the readers a time to reflect on their situations, and as seen in Psalm 6:6<sup>60</sup>. This idea of what night-time meant for the first readers, can shed new light on what daytime meant.  $\text{יוֹמָם}$  instead refers to ‘daily’, and it is used in such a way, with the focus on continuity. When  $\text{יוֹמָם}$  and  $\text{לַיְלָה}$  appear together, the focus usually refers to a temporal aspect.

The reason why ‘was heavy’ ( $\text{תִּכְבֶּד}$ )<sup>61</sup> is a feminine inclined verb is that it was the ‘hand’ of YHWH that ‘was heavy’. The concept of a ‘hand’ ( $\text{יָד}$ ) that weighs heavily upon occurs also in Judges 1:35; 1 Samuel 56.11; Job 23:2 and 33:7 (Koehler & Baumgartner, 2000e:1271). The stem<sup>62</sup> of  $\text{תִּכְבֶּד}$  has a rich meaning. In a negative sense, it may mean ‘burdensome’, ‘severe’ or ‘dull’, and in a sense, ‘numerous’, ‘rich’ or ‘honourable’ (Whitaker, et al., 1906). There is an intensesness in the meaning of this word, such as ‘very’ great and ‘much’ heavier.

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<sup>58</sup>  $\text{לַיְלָה}$  is mostly found in the Psalms (27 times), 17 times in Job, 3 times in Proverbs, 2 times in Ecclesiastes and 3 times in the Song of Solomon.

<sup>59</sup> See Pss 1:2; 22:2; 32:4; 42:3, 8; 55:10; 78:14; 91:5 and 121:6.

<sup>60</sup> Ps 6:6: “I am weary with my groaning; (I flood) my bed every night. With my tears (I drench) my couch.”

<sup>61</sup>  $\text{תִּכְבֶּד}$  is translated as “was heavy”. The verb is in the Qal imperfect form, third person female singular.

<sup>62</sup>  $\text{כִּבֵּד}$  is the stem of  $\text{תִּכְבֶּד}$ .

תִּכְבֵּד appears in the Qal imperfect tense, which means that the verb is in an incomplete form, either present, past or future. It means YHWH's hand heavy on the psalmist, is continuing to be substantial. By using the imperfect tense emphasises the continuation of the uncomfortable situation of the psalmist. In this verse, it is emphasised that verses 3 and 4 correlate. If this is true, הִחַרְשֵׁתִי ('I kept silence') in verse 3 corresponds with the following phrase in verse 4: תִּכְבֵּד (was heavy) עָלַי (upon me) יָדְךָ (your hand). Understanding tilling in the life of the first readers was different to our knowledge in the twenty-first century. Tilling involved a live ox or donkey, with a will of its own and the farmer who needs to put a 'heavy hand' on the 'plough' to keep it in the ground. Here the psalmist enhances the metaphor it started in verse 3 and verse 4, which describes YHWH as the farmer that tills.

The stem of תִּכְבֵּד<sup>63</sup> is כבד which has diverse translation possibilities in the Hebrew Bible. The verb usually translated as to 'honour', and secondly as 'to be heavy'<sup>64</sup>. This metaphor is synonymous with the הִחַרְשֵׁתִי (forced silence), and an antonym of the word in verse 8 (keeping my eye on you) (Strong, 1890).

עָלַי is constructed from the preposition 'על'. The significance that על might have in this context is the direction it denotes. In Hebrew wisdom literature, each direction or movement has a poetic meaning.<sup>65</sup> In this context, על has a specific function to illustrate that the hand of YHWH presses downwards.<sup>66</sup> Thus, על is not describing the essence of action but instead of emphasises proximity. על, in this sentence, indicates the proximity of YHWH's hand to the psalmist.

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<sup>63</sup> תִּכְבֵּד appears in one-hundred and seven times the Hebrew Bible, eleven times in the Psalms and twenty-two times in wisdom literature.

<sup>64</sup> The metaphor of a "heavy hand" is found only five times in the Hebrew Bible, and only once in the Psalms. It appears in Judg 1:35; 1 Sam 5:6, 11; Job 23:2 and Ps 32:4.

<sup>65</sup> For instance, up usually demonstrates blessing, assistance and hope. Right is more favourable than left. Forward demonstrates progress and backwards demonstrates regression. Turning demonstrates change.

<sup>66</sup> For instance, in the smaller section of the first book of the Psalms (25-34) has a specific function: In Psalm 27:2 enemies came עָלַי, in 29:3 the voice of the Lord came עָלַי the waters, in 31:16 YHWH's face came עָלַי his servant and in 33:22 the poet asks for YHWH's mercy עָלַי them.



The pronoun suffixed to על is first person singular, demonstrating that the psalmist is referring to himself. Using the first person singular suffixed pronoun has the effect that the reader might identify quickly with the text. It might be a poetic device to include and personifies the text. The first reader who recites or hears this psalm could identify more natural with it due to the personification.

‘Your hand’ (יָדְךָ)<sup>67</sup> consists of the suffix, second person masculine singular, and refers to YHWH. YHWH is directly addressed here. As the psalmist is found in this situation, the surrounding circumstance does not distance the psalmist from YHWH. The psalmist rather describes that his/her silence that he/she kept feels how an imagined experience of YHWH’s hand upon him/her would have felt. The use of יָדְךָ in a subsection of the first book of the Psalms (25-34)<sup>68</sup> sheds light on the thinking of the psalmist. יָדְךָ is synonymous with work or action, and the psalmist is stating that it is the work of YHWH upon his life ‘turning his moisture into the drought of summer’. Kirkpatrick (1921:162) suggests on a physical level, that this loss of moisture was due to a possible fever that the psalmist might have experienced. On a symbolic level, when one considers the meaning of forgiveness in the mind of the psalmist, a guilty conscience could be considered as an explanation. YHWH’s work, that is, YHWH as a just God making him aware of his sin, may possibly be turning his ‘moisture into the drought of the summer’. The psalmist would be correct to express this feeling by using the analogy of the ‘hand’ of God. Van der Woude (1997:658) correctly notes that ‘hand’ (יָדְךָ) ‘designates the irresistible might of Yahweh and the acts of God that result from it.’ (see Deut 32:39).

נִהְפַךְ לְשִׂדְיָי בְּחַרְבְּנֵי קִיץ סֵלָה:

[For day and night] My vigour was changed into the dry heat of summer. Selah.

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<sup>67</sup> יָדְךָ is conjugated from the stem יָד, which means hand. As earlier noted, the body parts that are present in the psalm and in wisdom literature, each carry a metaphorical meaning. יָדְךָ is the subject of יִכְבְּדֶנּוּ is followed by an adverb and prepositional clause “heavy” and “upon me.”

<sup>68</sup> . יָדְךָ is synonymous with the work of someone. Examples are found in Psalm 26:10; 28:2, 4; 28:5; 31:5 and in this verse.

In verse 5, **פָּנָה** is translated as ‘he,’ ‘she’ or ‘it’ is ‘turned’, ‘changed’, ‘overthrown’ or ‘demolished’. It appears in this sentence in the Niph`al perfect form. Niph`al usually denotes a passive form of the verb, and perfect means a completed action. Thus, the psalmist here avoids giving YHWH the direct blame for moisture that ‘turned into’ (**פָּנָה**) into the drought of summer instead chooses the passive form. Why is the passive form used here? Four possibilities exist: Firstly, the psalmist, out of respect, tried to stay clear of blaming God and falling into a theodicy problem. Secondly, the psalmist recognises YHWH is not directly to blame for this circumstance and that circumstances led him to this venture. Thirdly, his/her experience was the single worst experience ever experienced by the psalmist, and only YHWH could be so powerful as to explain the severity of the experience. Lastly, the psalmist stays clear of blaming God but implicates him in his dilemma. YHWH’s hand (action) is found at the centre of this metaphor. The psalmist is expressing a feeling of blame through this verse. This feeling changes immediately after this verse (Ps 32:6-11).

In the context of the first book of the *Psalter* **פָּנָה**<sup>69</sup> is used in a positive sense in Psalm 30:11, but negatively in this psalm. In Psalm 30:11 ‘mourning’ is ‘turned’ (**פָּנָה**) into ‘dancing’. When understanding **פָּנָה** as an indicator of sudden change, and not necessarily for the negative, the psalmist yet again enriched the text adding a hope factor for a positive outcome by using ‘turned’ (**פָּנָה**) that indicates a change for good in Psalm 30:11. Although his ‘vigour’ (**דָּשָׁן**) is now ‘turned’ (**פָּנָה**) into ‘mourning’ (**בְּחִרְבָּנִי**), there is still a chance to be restored as in Psalm 30:11<sup>70</sup>.

**לְשֹׁנִי**<sup>71</sup> is translated as ‘my vitality’ and is the subject of ‘was changed’ (**נִפְּנָה**) in verse 4. The psalmist focused here on his own ‘strength’ (**דָּשָׁן**). In the broader context of the Hebrew Bible, the phrase (**דָּשָׁן**) only appears twice. Only once is it translated as

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<sup>69</sup> **פָּנָה** appears ten times in the Psalms, twenty-four times in wisdom literature and ninety-two times in the Hebrew Bible (Whitaker, et al., 1906).

<sup>70</sup> Ps 30:11 You have turned my wailing into my dancing. You have removed my sackcloth and clothed me with joy.

<sup>71</sup> **לְשֹׁנִי** consists of a noun singular construct, suffixed by a personal pronoun first person singular.

‘vigour’ or ‘vitality’, but rather with ‘cake’ or ‘fresh’ as in Numeri 11:8. The psalmist did not use a common word for ‘vitality’ in the text; instead, choose to use לָשֶׁד<sup>72</sup>. The focus of this term is still ‘livelihood’; instead, a livelihood established by a sense of effort (Whitaker, et al., 1906). Two possibilities arise here for this choice. Firstly, it could have a poetic function to contrast his/her vigour (or moisture) with the drought. ‘Vitality’ (לָשֶׁד) was the only logical choice. Secondly, the concept of sweat is added to this (already rich) metaphor of ‘vigour’. ‘Sweat’ was synonymous with effort. The psalmist refers to the fact that his/her ‘effort’ (לָשֶׁד) equals ‘nothing’ (תַּרְבוּן)<sup>73</sup>.

‘My strength’ (לָשֶׁדִי) in verse 4 is compared to ‘my bones’ (עַצְמוֹתַי) and ‘through my roaring’ (בְּשִׁאֲגוֹתַי) in verse 3. The psalmist substitutes the ‘roaring through my bones’ in the previous verse with ‘my strength’ (לָשֶׁדִי) in verse 4. This substitute enhances the meaning of ‘my strength’ (לָשֶׁדִי) and confirms the reason why the psalmist chose the phrase.

בְּתַרְבוּן<sup>74</sup> in verse 4 is translated as ‘into the drought’. The psalmist illustrates a unique skill in this setting by using a rare form of the word. This poet was someone who had a superior level of knowledge and writing abilities. It is evident in the fact that some intricate poetic devices were deployed, with a strong focus on metaphors<sup>75</sup>. Two extreme concepts are put together in this verse, namely ‘vigour’ (לָשֶׁד) and ‘dry heat’ (תַּרְבוּן). ‘Vigour’ (לָשֶׁד) is a necessary element to live, and ‘dry heat’ (תַּרְבוּן) is a place

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<sup>72</sup> Other words in the Hebrew Bible is used to convey the meaning of vigour, and those are: פְּלֶח (ripeness, ripe age), עֲלוּמִים (youth, youthful strength), לֶחַ (vital force, freshness), חַיָּה (lively, vigorous), אֵזוֹן (wealth, power), רִתַּח (to bring to a boil, boiling), שְׁחָרוּת (blackness, black hair, prime of youth). These words occur between one and thirteen times in the Hebrew Bible.

<sup>73</sup> תַּרְבוּן is part of the prepositional clause of נִגְרַפָּה (“was changed”).

<sup>74</sup> בְּ is a preposition that is translated mostly as “in”. תַּרְבוּן only appears once in the Hebrew Bible. It has its origin from תַּרְבּ which means ‘to parch’ (through drought).

<sup>75</sup> The poet wrote to his first audience that more than likely understood what בְּתַרְבוּן means, and especially what תַּרְבּ means. תַּרְבּ occur forty times in the Hebrew Bible, twice in the Psalms, but mostly in the prophets with twenty-seven times.

where 'vigour' (לִשְׂדֵה) is hard to be found. The psalmist is not arguing that he has vigour' (לִשְׂדֵה) in 'dry heat' (חֲרִבָּה), but that his vigour' (לִשְׂדֵה) is 'dry heat' (חֲרִבָּה). Comparing these two concepts as equals metaphorically, the psalmist alludes that some aspects are equal. The challenging point of using metaphors is that the psalmist does not provide the possibilities of aspects where the two concepts correlate. It leaves the exact indented meaning hidden. Metaphors leave the meaning open for the reader's interpretation. The way metaphors can function is to identify common characteristics and apply them. For instance, the standard features might be the drought's (חֲרִבָּה) uninhabitability, the absence of moisture (לִשְׂדֵה), the duration, the effects on the surrounding economy, affecting agriculture and the heightened chance of fire. The psalmist used one image to convey a picture to the reader.

בְּחֲרִבָּה is used as part of the phrase: 'is turned (נִהְיָה) 'into the drought' (בְּחֲרִבָּה) 'of summer' (קִי). This phrase correlates with the concept in verse 3 of 'were worn out' (בָּלִי). In both verses, something that exists ('bones' in verse 3 and 'vigour' in verse 4) and then disappears by being 'worn out' (in v. 3) and 'turned into the drought of summer' (in v. 4). The psalmist describes how severe the experience was.

קִי is translated as 'summer'. Although קִי is a noun, the term functions as a pronoun in a third-degree (Whitaker, et al., 1906). 'Summer' (קִי) is enhancing the context of the drought. The 'dry heat' (חֲרִבָּה) of the 'summer' (קִי) carries a specific meaning of what heat the summer can bring. It thus alters the meaning of 'dry heat' (חֲרִבָּה) as only a dry period, to a hot, dry period.

The only other time 'summer' (קִי)<sup>76</sup> appears in the Psalms is in Psalm 74:17<sup>77</sup>, where 'summer' (קִי) and 'winter' (חֲרִיף) are considered something which God

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<sup>76</sup> קִי appears twenty times in the Hebrew Bible and appears only twice in the Psalms (Whitaker, et al., 1906).

<sup>77</sup> Ps 74:17 You defined all the boundaries of the earth; Summer and winter—you formed them.

created.<sup>78</sup> It demonstrates how the psalmist realises that YHWH is active in his life, but (at this moment in the psalm) struggles to understand.

סֵלָה at the end of verse 4 is an interjection translated as ‘Selah’. It means ‘suspension of music’ or ‘pause’. Kirkpatrick (1921:162) suggests that the psalmist is expressing distress, and thus preparing the way for the change in the next verse. The psalmist continues to say that this interlude may ‘have expressed the joy of forgiveness and served to separate this record of experience from the application form which follows’ (Kirkpatrick, 1921:162). The psalmist used verse 4 to highlight the experience he had in verse 3 and now uses ‘selah’ (סֵלָה) to finally highlight his expertise by asking the reader to stop and think what he’s just conveyed in the previous two verses.<sup>79</sup> סֵלָה could refer to musical breaks or pauses, which may indicate one of two possibilities: First, Psalm 32 was sung, or secondly, the psalmist used סֵלָה metaphorically to let the reader ‘pause’. This ‘pause’ let the reader consider what previous phrase (‘my vigour was changed into the dry heat of summer’) means. Either of these options, focus the attention on the previous two verses, and it is a suitable way to conclude this experience.

#### 2.3.3.4. Personal confession as a last resort (Ps 32:5)

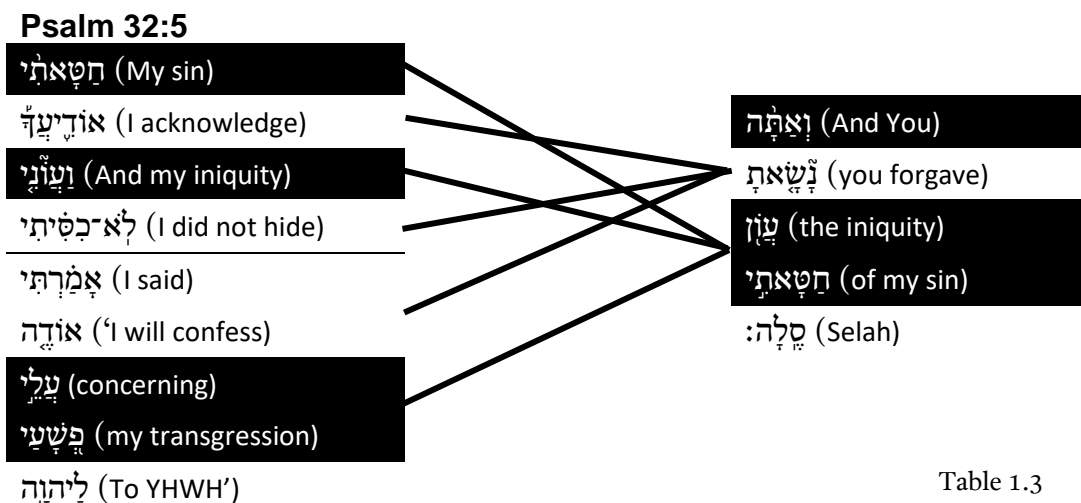


Table 1.3

<sup>78</sup> Seasons are seen in the context of the first audience as a direct indication of what God created, demonstrating His might. The understanding of His might correlated to the understanding the first audience has of seasons. Both have a cause on daily life, still explaining them was hard.

<sup>79</sup> סֵלָה occurs seventy-four times in the Hebrew Bible, but only two books make use of the word סֵלָה, and that is Psalms and Habakkuk. Seventy-one times in the Psalms, and three times in Habakkuk.

חַטָּאתַי אֲדַוְּעֶיךָ וְעֹנֵי לֹא-כַסִּיתִי אֶמְרָתִי אֹדְדָה עָלַי פְּשָׁעֵי לִיהוָה וְאַתָּה נָשָׂאתָ עָלַי חַטָּאתַי סֵלָה:

I made known my sin to you,  
 and my iniquity I did not cover.  
 I said, 'I will confess concerning my transgressions to YHWH,'  
 but you took away the guilt of my sin. Selah

Psalm 32:5 describes the personal confession as the last resort of the psalmist as a result of the agony that exists without forgiveness. Kirkpatrick (1921:161) and Bullock (2018:143) agrees with this statement. Lawrence (1996:805) argues accurately that verse 5 indicates that 'God is fully willing to forgive. But first the psalmist's silence must be broken, for the silence is the rejection of grace.' The psalmist confesses after trying different avenues. The psalmist attempted to keep silent (v. 3a) or to groan (v. 3b), but his/her bones worn out, he/she felt YHWH's hand heavy upon them, and their vigour was changed into the dry heat of summer.

Verse 3 and 4 share some characteristics with verse 5: both verses ends with סֵלָה (Selah) and the second part elaborate on the first part. Verse 4 elaborates on verse 3, and verse 5b develops on verse 5b. For this reason, the same pattern applies to verse 5, as in verse 3 and 4.

I gave details in Table 1.3 on verse 5: אֲדַוְּעֶיךָ (I acknowledge), לֹא-כַסִּיתִי (I did not hide), אֶמְרָתִי (I said) and אֹדְדָה (I will confess). These four verbs are compared to the one action YHWH did: נָשָׂאתָ (you forgave). By using the four verbs in an array of tenses, positively and negatively, denote how the psalmist confirmed his/her experience. He tried to do four different acts, and YHWH only acted once, נָשָׂאתָ (you forgave). Once again, the psalmist artfully and skilfully applied poetic devices to emphasise his circumstances.

Between the four actions that the psalmist takes, and the one act of YHWH the waw occurs. Verse 5 needs exploration to support the hypothesis of this study. The investigation will start with the waw and personal pronoun (וְאַתָּה) before the last verb<sup>80</sup>. As the poet reflects on the four actions he brought to a realisation: 'My sin has been

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<sup>80</sup> נָשָׂאתָ ("you took away").

taken away'. The question surrounding the waw is whether it is used as a copulative or a consecutive waw. Van der Merwer *et al.* (1999:163) states that the waw in the BHS is either a waw-consecutive or a waw-copulative. The waw-consecutive only appears in verb chains that constitute finite verbs preceded by a waw that is directly joined to the verb in one of the following tenses: perfect, imperfect, imperative, jussive or cohortative (Van der Merwer *et al.* (1999:298-300). In Psalm 32:5, the waw is not directly connected to the verb, but to the pronoun, which rules out the waw-consecutive. Van der Merwer *et al.* (1999:298-300) divide the use of the waw copulative into similar and dissimilar clauses. When all the different waw-copulative applications are considered, Psalm 32:5 either makes use of a waw-copulative that joins two related terms by contrasting them ('but'), or it joins two different terms that provide background information and could be translated with 'now'. Depending on if the preceding provisions are similar or different, one can determine that the waw is translated as 'but' or 'now'.

If the waw before 'you forgave' (וַשָּׂאָתָּךְ) in this context means 'and', then the result of the four preceding verbs<sup>81</sup>. The waw in this context does, however, plays a pivotal role in understanding the nuance that Psalm 32 adds to the understanding of forgiveness. In verse 10, 'but for the one who trusts' (וְהַבֹּטֵחַ), the waw is connected directly to the verb. Thus, the poet is familiar with the use of the conjunction וַ as 'but' (adversative).

In verse 5, the first person singular personal pronoun ('I') is the subject of the first four verbs<sup>82</sup>. It is followed by the fifth verb<sup>83</sup> that has the second person singular personal pronoun ('you') as a subject.

חָטַאתִי אֶדְבָּרֶיךָ

I made known my sin to you,

חָטַאתִי is translated as 'my sin'. An alternative translation could be 'my sin-offering'. This term indicates an offence, sometimes habitual sinfulness, and carries

<sup>81</sup> אֶדְבָּרֶיךָ (I acknowledge), לֹא-כִסֵּיתִי (I did not hide), אָמַרְתִּי (I said) and אֶדְבָּרֶיךָ (I will confess).

<sup>82</sup> אֶדְבָּרֶיךָ ("I made known"), כִּסֵּיתִי ("I did cover"), אָמַרְתִּי (I said), אֶדְבָּרֶיךָ ("I will tell/confess").

<sup>83</sup> וַשָּׂאָתָּךְ ("you took away").

some type of penalty, occasion, sacrifice or expiation (Whitaker, et al., 1906). The stem of תִּטַּח is טַח, which means ‘to miss’ and figuratively: ‘to sin’ (Whitaker, et al., 1906). Knierim (1997:543) defines טַח similar to (Whitaker, et al., 1906) but adds the phrase ‘to fall short’ to the definition. Both תִּטַּח and טַח occur in the Hebrew Bible, with two-hundred and ninety-four and two-hundred and thirty-eight times respectively. (Strong, 1890).

Furthermore, the stem (טַח) occurs frequently in Leviticus and Numbers, while the use of the stem (טַח) is spread out throughout the Old Testament. The poets thus understood what the meaning of in a Priestly way, and not in a Yahwist way.

The first occurrence of the phrase תִּטַּח in the psalms is in Psalm 25 (which it introduces a new section of the first book of the *Psalter*). The different use of תִּטַּח in Psalm 25 is תִּטַּח is used synonymously with פְּשָׁע (transgression), wherein Psalm 32, תִּטַּח is used synonymously with עוֹן (iniquity).

Longman & Enns (2008:88) uses Psalm 32:5 to illustrate the psalmist portray David as ‘being aware of his sins and his need to confess them.’ He says ‘the psalmist often refers to ‘my sin’<sup>84</sup> and ‘my iniquity’<sup>85</sup> (Snyman, 2004).

According to the table mentioned above, חַטָּאת (my sin), וְעוֹן (and my iniquity), פְּשָׁע (my transgression) are used interchangeably. Thus, the pattern of thought of Psalm 25 and Psalm 32 is similar, and it is evident that the smaller section of Book I of the *Psalter* (Pss 25-34) does have some similarities.

אֶדְוֶה is translated as ‘I acknowledge’. It is a primitive root (דָּוָה) meaning ‘to know’. It is used within the Hebrew Bible in diverse ways: figuratively, literally, euphemistically and inferentially. אֶדְוֶה<sup>86</sup> is a verb in the Hiph’il imperfect first person

<sup>84</sup> Pss 32:5; 38:3; 18; 51:2, 3.

<sup>85</sup> Pss 31:10; 32:5; 51:2.

<sup>86</sup> It is a common word in the Hebrew Bible, with nine-hundred and forty-six occurrences. דָּוָה occurs ninety-three times in the *Psalter*, twenty-three times in the first book of the *Psalter*, and five times in the smaller section of the first book of the *Psalter*, 25-34.



singular and has a suffix pronoun second person masculine singular. Verbs in the Hiph'il occur more often in the imperfect than in the perfect. The Hiph'il in this sense is used as a causative and could be translated the poet was 'caused to know' or in other words 'acknowledge'. Using the causative Hiph'il in this context might reflect on the poet referring to an event in his own life where he was caused to know his sin, or his sin was made public, and he had to acknowledge it. If the poet used any other sense of the word, the meaning could be different.

'I acknowledge' (אֲדַעֶנְךָ) is used alongside other verbs found the verse: לֹא־כִסִּיתִי (I did not hide), אָמַרְתִּי (I said) and אֶדְבָּר (I will confess). 'I acknowledge' (אֲדַעֶנְךָ) is a causative Hiph'il. The question arises on how 'I acknowledge' (אֲדַעֶנְךָ) compares to the other verbs in this sentence. At first glance, the verbs illustrate a progression relating to an action taken. 'I acknowledge' (אֲדַעֶנְךָ) is not a visible action, preferably an internal action. To 'not hide' (לֹא־כִסִּיתִי) is also not a visible action. Following לֹא־כִסִּיתִי is אָמַרְתִּי (I said), an activity that can be observed. אֶדְבָּר (I will confess) follows this progression, and it indicates then that אֶדְבָּר (I will admit) is a visible activity that can be seen. YHWH responds to all these verbs by using one-act: נָשָׂאתָ (you forgave). The summary phrase [נָשָׂאתָ (you forgave)] contains elements of the four actions it summarises. When YHWH is said to 'forgive' (נָשָׂאתָ), the phrase provides comprises, thus, of both visible and non-visible components. The phrase 'you forgave' (נָשָׂאתָ) synthesises the elements in the actions the poet took. Understanding the verse in this way, the poet thus thinks of 'you forgave' (נָשָׂאתָ) as something that have certain qualities and describes specific prerequisites according to the poet: particular details should be done (אֶדְבָּר, 'I will confess'), avoided (לֹא־כִסִּיתִי, 'I did not hide'), elements that are audible (and visible) (אָמַרְתִּי ('I said')), and components that are prominent (אֶדְבָּר, 'I will confess').

וְעֹנֵי לֹא־כִסִּיתִי

and my iniquity I did not cover.

וְעֲוֹנִי in verse 5 is translated as ‘and my iniquity’. It further means ‘perversity’, ‘mischief’, ‘fault’ or ‘sin’. עֲוֹן has עוֹנָה as the stem. עוֹנָה is translated as ‘perverse’. The poet suffixed the first person singular personal pronoun to עֲוֹן (‘iniquity’) that personalise ‘his iniquity’. The early readers and primary audience of this psalm immediately relate to this passage, asking themselves and testing their moral stance and circumstance, on whether they have or experienced ‘iniquity’ (עֲוֹן). What is helpful about Psalm 32, is the poet’s commitment not to condemn himself, but to acknowledge, not hide, say and confess his iniquity and sin, that YHWH can forgive his sin and iniquity. In his way, he guides the first readers and audience where they can receive care and comfort, and not condemnation.

Whereas חַטָּאת (sin) appeared mostly in Deuteronomy and Numbers, revealing a Priestly source, עֲוֹן<sup>87</sup> occurs mainly in Leviticus, making it a Yahwist source.

According to Table 1.3, there are three synonyms used in the text: חַטָּאתִי (my sin), וְעֲוֹנִי (and my iniquity) and פְּשָׁעִי (my transgression). The question that one could ask is why the poet intentionally included these three synonyms, each with a different history and different nuanced meanings? Did the poet include these three synonyms to illustrate to the first readers and audience that no matter the type of action or preferential use in a law-tradition, Yahwist or Priestly, that YHWH ‘forgave’ (נָשָׂא אֶת־חַטָּאתִי)?

לֹא־כִסֵּיתִי is translated as ‘I did not cover’. כִּסָּה<sup>88</sup> can also be translated as ‘plump’, ‘fill up hollows’. The poet is saying that the decision he made not to hide did not happen by chance. The poet had to forcefully ‘not hide’ his iniquity. Using the Pi’el in this tense conveys the way the poet understands the nature of ‘iniquity’ (עֲוֹן). The

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<sup>87</sup> עֲוֹן occurs two-hundred and thirty times in the Hebrew Bible, forty-six times in the wisdom literature and twenty-nine times in the Psalms.

<sup>88</sup> According to Strong (1890), by implication, כִּסָּה may also mean “to cover” (for clothing or secrecy): “close”, “clothe”, “conceal”, “cover” (self), “(flee to) hide” or “overwhelm”. כִּסֵּיתִי is a verb Pi’el perfect first person singular. Verbs occur in the Pi’el perfect little less than verbs occur in the Pi’el perfect. The Pi’el can have four different functions: Intensive, factitive, denominative or iterative. In this context, לֹא־כִסֵּיתִי is translated as “do not hide”, the intensive of “not hidden”.

poet understood the tendency to ‘cover’ (כָּסָה) your ‘iniquity’ (עֲוֹן) exists, and that one should try not to ‘cover’ (כָּסָה) one’s ‘iniquity’ (עֲוֹן).

<sup>89</sup>כָּסָה is the same word used in verse 1, where the poet says one is blessed whose sin is covered. It was used in verse 1 in the passive tense, and the poet did not specify whom it should include. In verse 5, however, the poet makes it understandable that one should not ‘cover’ (כָּסָה) sin yourself. By including it by oneself, one does not recognise YHWH’s power alone to cover sin.

As mentioned, when discussing word thirty-five in Psalm 32, it is evident that all the verbs the poet described, ascribes an aspect to forgiveness, the one action YHWH does. The ‘cover’ (כָּסָה) of your iniquity (עֲוֹן) is thus part of the process to be forgiven. And as understood in this context, it is more than to hide one’s sin, instead of hiding it intensively, to hiding it permanently.

אָמַרְתִּי אֹדָה עָלַי פְּשָׁעֵי לִיהוָה

I said, ‘I will confess concerning my transgressions to YHWH,’

אָמַרְתִּי<sup>90</sup> is translated as ‘I said’. The poet is using ‘I said’ (אָמַרְתִּי) as a reflective verb. As the poet is not stating to whom he ‘said’ it, it is seen as if the poet is talking to himself. The utterance might be audible or not. אָמַרְתִּי is found in the Qal perfect first person singular form. As per Table 1.3, this is one of the verbs found in verse 5 that the poet did, before YHWH נָשָׂאתָ (you forgave) him. The poet is introducing a direct sentence that will follow, quoting his words or thoughts directly.

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<sup>89</sup> כָּסָה appears one-hundred and fifty-two times in the Hebrew Bible, forty times in wisdom literature, and seventeen times in the Psalms, only twice in Book I of the Psalms, and both times in Psalm 32.

<sup>90</sup> It is a common word in the Hebrew Bible, with over five-thousand appearances in the Hebrew Bible. אֹדָה occurs six times in the subsection of the Psalms (25 – 34), eleven times in Book I of the Psalms, sixty-seven times in the Psalms, sixty-nine times in wisdom literature and one-hundred and fourteen times in the Hebrew Bible.

אֲוֹדָה is translated as 'I will (let myself) confess'. אֲוֹדָה has יָדָה as its primitive root; used only as denominative from יָד (hand). Strong (1890) dictionary demonstrates that 'I will confess' (אֲוֹדָה) means to use or hold out the hand and throw a stone or an arrow at or away from someone or something. It might also mean to revere or worship with extended hands. This last meaning of the יָדָה demonstrates the modern reader how the first reader understood this sentence. In today's context, the word confesses might bring several images to mind, like someone talks to a Roman Catholic priest at confession, someone found lying, and now must 'confess' or an opinion held back for a while but finally shared. The image which the poet created in the mind of the first reader or the primary audience was different. The picture that the poet created by using a word deriving from יָד (hand), carries the image of worship and thanksgiving, rather than guilt. It is a verb that gives the summarised meaning: YHWH did (נִשְׁאַתָּה (you forgive)), the element of thanksgiving is added using the word אֲוֹדָה.

עָלַי is translated as 'concerning' in this verse. עָלַי has diverse meanings, usually denoting a downward action. To add the metaphorical sense behind אֲוֹדָה, that means the throwing of hands, the poet here added a preposition to add direction to אֲוֹדָה. It is an exciting addition to the already rich meaning in this verse. Now the poet demonstrates how he opens his hands עָלַי (on, concerning) his transgressions.

פְּשָׁעִי is translated as 'my transgression'. פְּשָׁע means 'crime', 'wrongdoing', 'offence concerning property', 'a misdemeanour'. It has as stem פָּשַׁע which means to break with/away from something, and to behave like a criminal and to be disloyal. The poet could choose to continue with the original word for sin that he used: חַטָּאת. As noted previously, the poet decided to include synonyms for sin that occurred more frequently in different theological settings. It indicated to the reader that all theological traditions are addressed here. The poet might have been aware of these various written sources, and cleverly used all the synonyms. The poet might have also been unaware of this different nuance, but as is evident from the ingenious poetic devices

that the poet used, it might be logical to assume the poet knew of these different nuances present.

The poet is using the plural form, of עֲשָׂוֹת<sup>91</sup> ('transgression'), unlike the previous time in verse 1 where he used synonyms for sin, both times singular. The poet might have referred to a specific incident in verse 1, but in verse 5, the poet now refers to a collection of sins he now confesses to. עֲשָׂוֹת<sup>92</sup> ('transgression') denotes more a 'rebellion' or 'transgression' than sin as understood in the Yahwist and Priestly sources. When the phrase (עֲשָׂוֹת) is used in Leviticus 16:16<sup>93</sup>, the phrase (עֲשָׂוֹת) is understood as the indirect message provided to YHWH when sinning. Transgression (עֲשָׂוֹת) thus denotes more of an attitude than an instance of sin. To understand it this way: an attitude of 'transgression' עֲשָׂוֹת causes 'sin' (תַּאֲחָזֶה).

לַיהוָה is translated as 'to YHWH'. Here the poet indicates that confession should not be taken to any other person or place than to YHWH. The options for confessing sins and transgressions for the first readers and the first audience were vast. They could confess to each other, to the Levites in the temple or the authorities (Lev. 5:1-5). An offering rather than a confession to YHWH was as prevalent at the time. Leviticus 16:21 demonstrates Aaron confesses over a goat, Leviticus 26:40 and Numbers 5:7 the person to confess to is not mentioned at all, 1 Kings 8:23 says to confess the name of YHWH, Nehemiah 9:2 demonstrates to confess to 'their fathers'. The one time 'confess' is used in Job, in Job 40:14, Job confesses, not iniquity, sin or transgression, but that YHWH can save him. In the first book of the *Psalter*, יָדָה is used as 'give thanks' or 'praise' and only once translated as confess. Thus, confession directly to YHWH, for forgiveness, is introduced in this verse in the *Psalter* and conveys

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<sup>91</sup> עֲשָׂוֹת is a noun masculine plural constructs with a pronoun first person singular suffixed to the noun.

<sup>92</sup> עֲשָׂוֹת appears thirty-six times in the Wisdom literature and fourteen times in the Psalms. However, עֲשָׂוֹת is not a common word in the Pentateuch and does not appear in Deuteronomy. עֲשָׂוֹת is found a total of ninety-three times in the Hebrew Bible and is found mostly in the prophets.

<sup>93</sup> Leviticus 16:16: And he shall make an atonement for the holy place, for the uncleanness of the children of Israel, and for their עֲשָׂוֹת in all their תַּאֲחָזֶה: and so, shall he do for the tabernacle of the congregation, that remains among them during their uncleanness (KJV).

a shift in the understanding of forgiveness. With לִיהוָה, the poet concludes his direct quotation of himself.

וְאַתָּה נָשַׁאתָ עָוֹן חַטָּאתַי סֵלָה:

but you took away the guilt of my sin. Selah

וְאַתָּה is translated as ‘and You’. Lawrence (1996:806) argues correctly that verse 5c ‘marks the turning point of the psalm.’ Lawrence (1996:806) further says that ‘its pronoun ‘you’ is emphatic’ as well as near the centre of the psalm. After this point, any word for sin doesn’t appear again in the psalm. The poet quoted himself in the previous passage, and as soon as the quote stopped, suddenly one finds YHWH is now present in the conversation, and the poet now speaks directly with YHWH. The poet feels comfortable enough to address YHWH directly using a personal pronoun, אַתָּה. In verse 5, the focus was on the poet, trying to take four actions, and the study revealed that all four verbs were in different tenses and modes, revealing the confusion of the poet. With וְאַתָּה, a definite turn in focus occurred. The first time that the conjunction ו is found in the text, the first reader is intrigued, either expecting a metaphorical repetition of the previous sentence, or a contrast. The first reader would understand this type of poetic device, and the first statement was repeated. The second time the waw ( ו ) is used, the reader once again anticipates one of the two options, which will either corroborate the first two statements or will answer the first two statements by providing an alternative solution. The poet introduced YHWH as the answer to this problem using a strong Hebrew poetic device: the personal pronoun. In this instance, second person singular, referring to YHWH. The tension for this answer was built using verses 1 and 2, where the reader is introduced to a utopia where someone’s sin is forgiven. The poet then shares his dire situation. Verse 5 serves then to satisfy the first reader’s urge to return to the utopia painted in verses 1 and 2. The poet adheres to the anticipated need of the first reader, by focusing the attention of the first audience to YHWH by using וְאַתָּה.

נָשָׂאָה<sup>94</sup> is translated as ‘you forgave’. סָלַח is the common word ‘forgiveness’ in the Hebrew Bible and נָשָׂא the second common word. סָלַח is common in the priestly source (Numbers and Leviticus), and נָשָׂא is not used primarily to mean ‘to forgive’. The poet rather chose to use a word that the first audience would understand as YHWH lifting the poet, as well as forgiving. He did not choose to use the word that connects to the priestly understanding of forgiveness. One might argue that the poet intentionally used נָשָׂא to add meaning, while another might argue that not using סָלַח is taking away meaning. If the poet used סָלַח, the audience would have seen the passage as an add-on to the law, in that the relationship between man and YHWH is now restored. However, the psalmist did use סָלַח, but נָשָׂא – a word frequently used in passages containing both the Yahwist and Priestly source. The only difference is that נָשָׂא is a word with a much richer meaning. Once again, writing as a noteworthy poet cares deeply about nuances and poetic devices. As stated, נָשָׂא (‘to forgive’) may mean to help someone upwards, figuratively. Moreover, in this context, YHWH not only ‘forgave’ him, but He also ‘exalted’ him, helped him from a depressed state to an optimistic state of mind. The first audience understood the nuance behind forgive (נָשָׂא) as נָשָׂא appears six-hundred and fifty-three times in the Hebrew Bible, and forty-nine times in Psalms.

נָשָׂאָה is a verb in the Qal perfect form, second person masculine singular. The poet demonstrates YHWH forgave already, and it is not still ongoing, but the action is now completed. Notable about using the Qal perfect is the poet understood he does not need to be assisted by YHWH continually to experience this exalting forgiveness, but he only needs it once in the past, to enjoy his position in the present.

As noted previously, YHWH that ‘forgives’ (נָשָׂא) is the one answer the poet needed for a sum of actions he tried to avoid or better his situation [אֲדַרְבֵּי] (I

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<sup>94</sup> נָשָׂא can also be translated as “take away”, “to carry”, “to lift”, “lift up”, “to raise”, “to raise high”, “to maintain”, “to exalt”, “to have a longing for”, “to bring” or “to take”.

acknowledge), לֹא־כִסִּיתִי (I did not hide), אָמַרְתִּי (I said), אֹדוּהָ ('I will confess)]. To understand what to 'forgive' (נָשָׂא) and סָלַח, means one might ask if the efforts of the poet were futile or necessary to receive נָשָׂא and סָלַח. Understandably in this context, it all depends on using the וְ before the personal pronoun, as וְ is used freely in the Hebrew language, according to Whitaker *et al.* (1906). Both answers to this question might be acceptable if וְ means 'and' it will function as a consecutive and what follows might be the result, and if the וְ means 'but', it will work as a conditional וְ.

עֲוֹן is translated as 'the iniquity'. It is the same עֲוֹן (iniquity) that the poet wrote about at the beginning of verse 5. He thus 'did not hide' his עֲוֹן (iniquity) used in the first part of verse 5 as synonyms with חַטָּאתִי (my sin). The difference in the second part, one might suggest, is here the poet might illustrate two different options. Firstly, the poet might merely be employing a poetic device in showcasing his writing skills by repeating עֲוֹן and חַטָּאת twice in the sentence. Secondly, because the poet is writing a 'Maskil', as noted in the title, the poet might teach the first audience about the relationship between עֲוֹן and חַטָּאת. Taking into consideration the Hebrew mind and pattern of thought, options are not usually mutually exclusive, and one might find that both these options are correct. The poet is adding a trait of wisdom poetic literature to his 'Maskil', as well as teaching the first audience. The question arises: What do these two words teach the primary audience? As 'iniquity' (עֲוֹן) can also mean rebellion, the poet is saying that YHWH did not 'forgive' (נָשָׂא) his 'sin' (חַטָּאת). YHWH 'forgave' (נָשָׂא) his 'rebellion' (עֲוֹן). Thus, the poet is teaching his first audience that 'sin' (חַטָּאת) is a form of 'rebellion' (עֲוֹן). The unintended consequence of 'sin' חַטָּאת is 'rebellion' עֲוֹן. Moreover, it is this 'rebellion' (עֲוֹן), causing problems in the life of the poet.

חַטָּאתִי is translated as 'of my sin' and חַטָּאת is translated as 'an offence (sometimes habitual sinfulness), and its penalty, occasion, sacrifice, or expiation' according to Strong (1890). It is a derivative of חַטָּאת and is translated as 'properly to



miss; hence (figuratively and generally) to sin<sup>95</sup>; by inference to forfeit, lack, expiate, repent' according to Strong (1890). The psalmist used a word that meant to 'miss'. The psalmist feeling of 'rebellion' (עָוָן) caused the poet to miss (אָטָה) his mark, his goal. This goal might be the goal he/she set for him-/herself or is set for him/her.

אָטָה ('my sin') is a noun feminine singular construct with a pronoun first person singular suffixed. The psalmist highlights it is his 'sin' (אָטָה) and not someone else's 'sin' (אָטָה). The poet is taking responsibility and ownership of his 'sin' (אָטָה). The first audience would appreciate the honesty and frankness of the poet, as it was not uncommon at that time to hide one's 'sin' (אָטָה). The notion of displaying one's weakness could not be something helpful, and the poet in this regard is breaking new ground.

The poet starts and concludes this section with using אָטָה<sup>96</sup>. To summarise, the psalmist used four metaphors for trespassing: אָטָה ('my sin'), וְעֹוֹנִי (and my iniquity), עָלַי (the guilt) and פְּשָׁעִי (my transgression). The elaborate use of metaphors in this 'Maskil' serves two purposes. Firstly, it showcases his poetic capabilities, and secondly, it explains the exact nuances he/she intended, leaving the reader with a rich understanding of his experience.

סְלָה is again translated as 'Selah'. With סְלָה, the psalmist provides the reader with time to reflect on what has just been said. It might be interpreted as a rest marker in the text.

### 2.3.3.5. A call for and an example of prayer (6a-7i)

[6] עַל-זֹאת יִתְפַּלֵּל כָּל-חֹסֵד אֱלֹהִים לְעַתְּ מִצָּא רֶכֶּ לְשֹׁטֵף מִיָּם רַבִּים אֲלֵיו לֹא יִגִּיעוּ:

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<sup>95</sup> Kirkpatrick (1921:162) agrees and give three meanings for אָטָה. It may mean 'rebellion,' 'wandering away' (missing the mark), or 'depravity.'

<sup>96</sup> אָטָה is found two hundred and ninety-four times in the Hebrew Bible, and only thirteen times in Psalms. The first time אָטָה appears in the Psalms is in Psalm 25, the first Psalm of the subsection of the first book of the Psalms.

[6] Therefore, let all the faithful pray unto you at a time for finding you. Surely, at a flood of great waters, they will not cause to reach unto him.

[7] אַתָּה סֵתֶר לִי מִצָּר תִּצְרֵנִי רְנִי פִלֵּט תִּסּוּבְּבֵנִי סֵלָה:

[7] You are my hiding place from trouble. You preserve me, with songs of deliverance you surround me. Selah

Psalm 32:6a-7i is a call for prayer as well as an example of prayer after the psalmist expressed his confession. Then he turns to the community to join him/her/them in trusting on YHWH to receive forgiveness for their sin. Kirkpatrick (1921:161) correctly argues that verse 6 is a prayer from his circumstances. He does not see the link between verses 6 and 7. Bullock (2018:143) rightly sees the link between verse 6 and 7 but adds verse 5 to the unit as well.

Verse 6 and 7, as an example of prayer, aid in finding the *Sitz im Leben* of Psalm 32. Berlin (2007:71-72) argues that 'while the implied audience of prayers is God, the real audience is the praying community.' Berlin (2007:72) further argues that for the psalm to be meaningful, it should 'reflect the ideology and values of the community.' Verse 6 and 7 address values of hope ('will not cause to reach unto him') and ideals of safety ('You are my hiding place'). These values and ideologies are something a praying community would foster.

The second part of Psalm 32 is discussed by using Tables 1.4 and 1.5. These two tables suggest that Psalm 32 and Psalm 33 are correctly divided, in contrast to what Snyman (2004:155-158) suggested that there might be 'a possibility of a chiasmic construction between verse 11 of Psalm 32 and verse 1 of Psalm 33.' According to Table 1.4, however, there are links between Psalm 32:7 and Psalm 32:11. Lawrence (1996:286) discusses how verse 6-7 and 10-11 have a chiasmic structure. He explains the chiasmic pattern as 'invitation' (v. 6), 'profession of faith' (v. 7), 'profession of faith' (v. 10) and 'invitation' (v. 11). Table 1.4 showcases the chiasmic pattern (Craigie & Tate, 2004).

Thornton (2013:71), contests that the church should be more penitential in her approach to forgiveness. He especially notes: 'Having experienced the glorious forgiveness of God, the psalmist next turns to God's people and instructs them on the personal lessons he has learned. This didactic section of the psalm consists of: a call to confessional prayer (vv. 6-8), a warning about stubbornness (vv. 9-10), and a concluding call to praise (v. 11)' (Thornton, 2013:71). This study concludes with a

different summary of Psalm 32:6-11. There were specific images created in the mind of the psalmist that adds nuance to every part of Psalm 32. What Thornton (2013:71) wrote is a useful example of how the modern reader might understand the text. It forms an antithesis to what this study found in the images created by the psalmist (Flint, 2014). Terrien, S. (2014:160) goes so far as to say that Psalm 32 should never have been part of the seven penitential Psalms, as this is instead a psalm about ‘an affirmation about the miracle of God’s forgiveness that requires none of the discipline or work penitence’.

עַל-זֹאת יִתְפַּלֵּל כָּל-חֹסֵיד אֱלֹהִים

Therefore, let all the faithful pray unto you

In the phrase עַל-זֹאת, עַל is a preposition and is translated as ‘for’. זֹאת is a feminine singular pronoun and is translated as ‘this’. עַל-זֹאת significantly introduces the second part of Psalm 32. The poet anticipates the previous verses to serve as the setting of the context (vv. 1-5), and now the answer (vv. 6-11) to this context follows.

The verb form יִתְפַּלֵּל<sup>97</sup> is translated as ‘let he/she pray’. The Hitpa’el<sup>98</sup> usually expresses reciprocal or reflexive action. The psalmist emphasises that everyone should ‘judge’, ‘pray’ or ‘intercede’ themselves. יִתְפַּלֵּל is placed at the beginning of verse 6, while the second verb יִגִּיעוּ stands at the end of verse 6. It forms an inclusio of verbs. The poet uses the placement of the verbs to depict the necessity to pray (יִתְפַּלֵּל) and the very distant danger of water that reaches (יִגִּיעוּ) the faithful.

The verb פָּלַל<sup>99</sup> appears more in history books than in the wisdom literature. This fact that פָּלַל is less used in a poetic context, preferably in a historical or a futuristic context shows that Psalm 32 is both a thanksgiving psalm and wisdom literature.

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<sup>97</sup> The stem of the word פָּלַל can be translated as “to pronounce judgement” or by extension “to pray or to intercede” (Whitaker, et al., 1906).

<sup>98</sup> יִתְפַּלֵּל is found the following form: verb, Hitpa’el, imperfect, third person, masculine, singular.

<sup>99</sup> פָּלַל appears eighty-four times in the Hebrew Bible, in eighty-two verses. Thirty-four times in the history books, seven times in the Pentateuch and six times in wisdom literature (Job 42:8, 10; Pss 5:2; 32:6; 72:15; 106:30 (Strong, 1890).

פָּלַל correlates with the verb which is שִׂמְחֶהוּ in verse 11, translated as ‘be glad’. In both instances, the psalmist is pointing towards a futuristic demand. In verse 6, a call is made to ‘all the faithful/godly’ (כָּל־הַחֲסִידִים) to ‘pray’ (יְתַפְּלֵל) ‘unto you’ (אֵלַי). Similarly, in verse 11, a call is made to ‘you upright in heart’ (וְגִילוּ) to ‘be glad’ (שִׂמְחֶהוּ) ‘in YHWH’ (בַּיהוָה). צַדִּיקִים (righteous). כָּל־הַחֲסִידִים<sup>100</sup> is the subject of יְתַפְּלֵל and is translated as ‘all the faithful’.

חָסִיד appears twenty-five times in the Psalms, and only once in seven other books (Strong, 1890). It makes חָסִיד a preferred term by the poets of the psalms. The reason is obscure, but understanding the symbolic meaning behind it, that is, ‘to bow the head to an equal,’ might suggest the Psalms provides the ideal place for this meaning. חָסִיד (righteous) correlates with וְגִילוּ (you upright in the heart) in verse 11. These two verbs correlate because both are the subject of the imperative verbs (‘pray’ (יְתַפְּלֵל) in verse 6 and ‘be glad’ (שִׂמְחֶהוּ) in verse 11).

אֵלַי is the direct object of יְתַפְּלֵל (‘let them pray’). When correlating אֵלַי<sup>101</sup> with בַּיהוָה (in YHWH) in verse 11, it is evident that this preposition refers to YHWH.

The logical conclusion based on these consequences<sup>102</sup> would be that the poet wants the reader to realise that for a point in the duration of his or her situation, YHWH is found and that that point in time should be utilised wisely by praying to YHWH to confess their sins.

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<sup>100</sup> כָּל־ is a noun meaning “total, in all; all; the whole; everyone; everything”(Whitaker et al., 1906). חָסִידִים means “the faithful, godly”. חָסִיד is the stem of the word, and means “to bow (neck only in courtesy to an equal), to be kind”. חָסִיד is an adjective here, used in an absolute form.

<sup>101</sup> אֵלַי is translated as “unto you” and is made up by a preposition אֵל and a suffix pronoun second person masculine singular.

<sup>102</sup> לְעֵת is translated as “at the time”. לְ is a preposition meaning “for, until, into, to, towards, away, from, of, about” (Whitaker et al., 1906). עֵת is a noun, singular, absolute meaning “the time, point in time, occasion, time”. According to Strong (1890), עֵת has its origins in עָד meaning “duration”, “eternity”, “ever”, “old” or “perpetually”. עָד has עָדָה as its root, according to Strong (1890), meaning simply to advance, pass on or continue.

As shown in Table 1.4, there is not a corresponding phrase in verse 11 for the phrase לְעֵת (at a time) מְצָא (when finding you). This phrase is a temporal adverbial phrase that describes ‘pray’ (יְתַפְּלֵל). In verse 11, be glad (שִׂמְחֶהוּ) has no adverbial phrase. A notable correspondence between the two phrases<sup>103</sup> is the use of the present tense in verse 6 and 11, giving an instruction that prayer and praise should happen now.

לְעֵת מְצָא

at the time for finding you.

מְצָא<sup>104</sup> is translated as ‘to find you’. לְעֵת is an adverbial temporal clause to יְתַפְּלֵל and provides a reason for the call of the psalmist to pray at a specific time. It provides the reader with insight into the mind of the poet. When compared to the understanding of the modern reader, YHWH could be found at a specific time, and in that time, one should pray to him. The argument could be made that this is a poetic or wisdom device and that the poet is not claiming theological truths, instead explains his own experience as the psalmist experience this ‘time of acceptance’ (Kirkpatrick (1921:163). Kirkpatrick (1921:163) also suggests that if there is a time of finding YHWH, then there should be a time of not finding him. The phrase: ‘at a time when finding you’ is seen as only an expression of their time. Similarly, one could conclude not that a song about the ‘sunrise’ means modern society does not understand the way in which the universe works. ‘Sunrise’ instead explains an observation. The poet similarly explains an observation of going through a challenging time in one’s life, there is a window of opportunity where one feels the urge to pray, and that time should be utilised fully by the faithful<sup>105</sup>.

רַק לְשֵׁטַף מַיִם רַבִּים אֲלֵיו לֹא יָגִיעוּ:

Surely at the flood of many waters, they will not reach him.

<sup>103</sup> Verse 6 - יְתַפְּלֵל (pray) כָּל־יְהוֹסֵיד (all the faithful/godly) אֲלֵיךָ (Unto you) לְעֵת (at a time) מְצָא (when finding you). Verse 11 - שִׂמְחֶהוּ (Be glad) בְּיְהוָה (In YHWH) וְגִילֵי (you upright in + heart) צְדִיקִים (righteous).

<sup>104</sup> מְצָא can be translated as “finding you”. מְצָא is a verb, Qal infinitive construct. מְצָא may also mean according to Strong (1890): “to come forth to, that is, to appear, or exist; transitively to attain, that is, find or acquire; figuratively to occur, meet or be present.”

<sup>105</sup> Lawrence (1996:806) sees “the faithful” in verse 6 anticipating verse 10, namely the occurrence of steadfast love. Lawrence (1996:806) further argues that “the faithful derive their identity not from their own accomplishments but from God’s faithfulness in forgiving and renewing them,” pointing to Ps 31:23.

וְקִי means ‘surely,’ and the poet explains in verse 6, his conviction when introducing the conditional clause that is to follow. What follows is a recommendation that the poet confirms. By using the circumstances and context, the poet confirms what follows with his/her own experience.

לְשֹׁטֵף<sup>106</sup> is assessed both as a positive and negative meaning, ‘to cleanse’ positive, and ‘drown’ negative.

רַבִּים<sup>107</sup> מַיִם is translated as ‘great water’, but can figuratively mean ‘juice, urine, semen’. Once again, the poet uses a word where the symbolic meaning of the word might offer insight into the thinking of the poet. In relation to verse 10, the poet refers to the ‘many sorrows of the wicked’ (see Table 1.4). The phrase ‘great water’ is better explained when Psalm 93 is considered. Psalm 93 exalts God and proclaims his reign. Psalm 93 claims that YHWH is higher than the ‘great waters’. Human (2013:168), argues to this point: ‘Yahweh’s relation to all powers in creation is distinctly outlined as enthroned ‘above the waters’ (Ps 93). His kingship surpasses all life-threatening powers – suffering and chaos included.’ Similarly, in Psalm 32, the phrase ‘great waters’ as a life-threatening event is used to focus on YHWH through prayer.

אֶלָּיו<sup>108</sup> is translated as ‘unto him’ and is the direct object of יָגִיעוּ ‘they will reach’. The psalmist here created an image of either a significant amount of rain pouring down creating a ‘flood’ or a ‘flood’. Now the poet announces with certainty that it will come ‘unto him/her’ (אֶלָּיו) (anyone who prays). It relates to the last phrase in verse 10, namely: ‘loyal love (וְיִסְדֵּךְ) ‘surrounds him’ (יְסֹבְבֶנִי). Kirkpatrick (1921:163) compares this metaphor with the one found Psalm 28:16, Isaiah 28:2, 17, 30:28 and Nahum 1:8.

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<sup>106</sup> לְשֹׁטֵף is translated as “in a flood”. The term has a primitive root of: “to gush; by implication to inundate, cleanse; by analogy to gallop, conquer: - drown, flow over, (-whelm), rinse, run, rush, (thoroughly) wash (away)” according to Strong (1890). The description מַיִם לְשֹׁטֵף רַבִּים is negative, and it correlates with רַבִּים (many) מְכַאוֹבִים (sorrows) in verse 10. שֹׁטֵף appears only six times in the Hebrew Bible, and only in the wisdom literature and prophets.

<sup>107</sup> רַבִּים means “great” or “many”. According to Strong (1890), it also means: “abundant (in quantity, size, age, number, rank, quality).” רַבִּים is a common term in the Hebrew Bible, with four hundred and fifty-eight appearances, evenly spread across all books (Strong, 1890).

<sup>108</sup> It is a preposition אֶל with a suffix pronoun third person, masculine, singular.

In these metaphors ‘a flood’ relates with the author’s position on a rock above the waters. Thus, one might assume that the reader is found upon a rock in this situation or in a situation threatened by life-endangering forces.

The poet now emphasises that a great flood will not reach the threatened petitioner by using a standalone negation<sup>109</sup>.

לֹא יִגִּיעוּ: <sup>110</sup> is translated as ‘they will not reach or touch’. With the verb in the Hiph’il imperfect form, it means that the poet used the future causative function. ‘The flood then will not be ‘caused’ to reach you’ because of the causative function of the Hiph’il.

The poet states that the waters will not reach the faithful petitioner, but in verse 10, he asserts that YHWH’s love will ‘surrounds him’ (יְסֻבְּבֵנִי). A comparison between the two appears here, where after the reader can replace the frightening picture of a threatening flood of water or wickedness, with an image of YHWH’s (covenant) love surrounding them.

Verse 7 is translated in the LEB as:

‘You are my hiding place; from trouble you preserve me.  
 With cries of deliverance, you surround me. Selah’

אַתָּה סֵתֶר לִי מִצָּר תִּצְרֵנִי רַגְלִי פִּלְט תְּסֻבְּבֵנִי סֵלָה:

If one, however, considers the word sequence of a sentence in Hebrew, namely verb, subject, object, it can be translated as follows:

‘You are my hiding place from trouble.  
 You preserve me with cries of deliverance. You surround me. Selah

The sentence starts with אַתָּה (pronoun). This emphasises ‘you’, referring to YHWH, and shows the gratitude and worship from the psalmist have towards YHWH. It accents why verse 6 is a call for prayer and verse 7 an example of prayer.

<sup>109</sup> לֹא is a negation meaning “not”.

<sup>110</sup> יִגִּיעוּ is a verb, Hiph’il imperfect, third person, masculine, plural. According to (Whitaker *et al.*, 1906) it can be translated as “to reach, to touch violently, to strike or to afflict”. יִגִּיעוּ appears throughout the Hebrew Bible, with the most occurrences in Leviticus, with twenty-eight occurrences. יִגִּיעוּ appears eight times in the Psalms and one hundred and fifty times in the Hebrew Bible (Strong, 1890).

## אַתָּה סֵתֶר לִי מִצָּר

You are my hiding place from trouble.

In verse 7, אַתָּה is translated as ‘you’. The psalmist continues to address YHWH directly. Later, in verse 10, he reverts to an impersonal tone. This personal tone adds a dynamic, which was not present until verse 5. The reader can now personalise the text in addressing YHWH while reading the text.

סֵתֶר<sup>111</sup> is translated as ‘hiding place.’ The term appears nineteen out of the thirty-six appearances in the wisdom literature<sup>112</sup>. It refers mostly to the origin of man, that is the womb or a place where YHWH keeps people safe. With this term, the poet explains that YHWH is his secret place and his origin.

Note that YHWH is not placing him in a hiding place spatially, but YHWH ‘is’ his hiding place. This links with verse 10 where he says: ‘But he whom trusts’ (וְהַבּוֹטֵחַ) ‘in the Lord’ (בְּיְהוָה) is surrounded by (the covenant of) love. Thus, the psalmist sees YHWH as a space to be in and to be surrounded by Him. This might allude to the temple where one could experience the presence of YHWH. In this allusion the temple is not a place built by man, it is instead a state of mind, a consciousness. By using לִי<sup>113</sup>, once again, the poet makes it personal by stating that YHWH is ‘his’ hiding place.

מִצָּר<sup>114</sup> is translated as ‘from trouble’. In the ancient Hebrew mind, a direction usually has significance. For instance, ‘upwards’ is generally perceived as positive and ‘downwards’ as unfavourable. ‘Towards’ and ‘away from’ typically illustrate the degree of the essence moving, either for better or worse. In this instance, צָר is something negative from where one needs to move away from. מִן does not illustrate movement,

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<sup>111</sup> סֵתֶר may be translated as “covering, protection or secrecy” according to (Whitaker *et al.*, 1906). סֵתֶר is the stem and could mean “to be absent, keep close, conceal, hide or keep secret” according to Strong (1890).

<sup>112</sup> It appears thirty-six times in the Hebrew Bible, nineteen times in wisdom literature.

<sup>113</sup> לִי is translated by “for me”. לִי is a preposition ל + suffix pronoun, first person, singular.

<sup>114</sup> מִצָּר is a preposition מִן plus an adjective, singular, absolute. צָר is translated as “narrow, need, meagre, restraint or anxiety” according to Whitaker, et al. (1906). מִן can be translated as “because, without, from, since, of, after or away” according to Whitaker, et al. (1906).



but a current state of ‘away-ness’. Unlike a flood in verse 6, the focus is preferably on a geostatic location. In this instance, a safe geostatic location. This phrase serves as a note on the advantages of having YHWH as a hiding place.

The stem of צר is צר־בֵּת which can mean ‘burning’. צר־בֵּת has the root of צָרַר, which is translated as the fusing of metals. It is unknown what the author had in mind when writing this ‘Maskil’, but all this meaning is infused into the sense of צָר.

תִּצְרְנֵנִי רְגֵי פִלֵּט

You preserve me with cries of deliverance.

תִּצְרְנֵנִי<sup>115</sup> is translated as ‘you preserve me’. The poet used the imperfect here, meaning that the ‘preservation’ of YHWH is expected to continue. The psalmist once again personalises this sentence by using the first-person singular suffix.

רְגֵי<sup>116</sup> is translated as ‘with songs’. The correlating passage of verse 10 and 11 also ends with the call for songs. Although רִנָּה may mean ‘song of deliverance’ on its own, the poet still included ‘deliverance’ (פִּלֵּט).

פִּלֵּט<sup>117</sup> in verse 7 is translated as ‘deliverance’. Deliverance (פִּלֵּט) only appears once in the Hebrew Bible, and its root appears twenty-six times, seventeen times in the Psalms. Deliverance is also a theme in Psalm 32. The concept of liberation does not repeat in verse 10 and 11, and one can see the progression: The psalmist in verse 10 and 11 celebrates the new dawn, as a delivered person, not asking any more for

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<sup>115</sup> תִּצְרְנֵנִי is parsed as a verb Qal imperfect, second person masculine, singular with a pronoun first person singular suffixed. תִּצְרֵן can also mean to “keep watch, watch over, keep from, to protect, to observe or to comply with.” תִּצְרֵן is a word appearing sixty-two times in the Hebrew Bible. Forty-five times in wisdom literature. This is more than two-thirds. תִּצְרֵן is thus a popular word to use in wisdom literature.

<sup>116</sup> Further meanings include “a cry or a shout (of deliverance)”. This is the only time this word appears in the Hebrew Bible, but the stem of the word, רָגַן, appears fifty-four times in the Hebrew Bible. רָגַן appears mostly in the Psalms and in Isaiah, with a combined total of thirty-nine.

<sup>117</sup> found in the following form: Verb Pi’el infinitive construct. פִּלֵּט can mean “escape” as well, and its root, פָּלַט can mean: “to slip out, that is, escape; causatively to deliver: - calve, carry away safe, deliver, (cause to) escape” according to Strong (1890).

forgiveness, but celebrating the splendour of forgiveness. Kirkpatrick (1921:164) argues that the author either found ‘occasions for rejoicing’ everywhere he turns or that the author is rejoicing godly about the deliverance. As liberation is a theme of Psalm 32, the author rejoices over his/her newfound deliverance from sin and guilt.

תְּסֻבְּבֵנִי סֵלָה:

You surround me. Selah

תְּסֻבְּבֵנִי<sup>118</sup> is translated as ‘you surround me’. The Po’el form expresses the same variety of meaning as the Pi’el form. Thus, it can show pure, resultative, intensive, causative or other kinds of actions depending on the context. The poet gave emphasis to the ending of his/her direct address to YHWH by using the Po’el form. YHWH is singing ‘intensively’ ‘songs of deliverance’ to him/her. This last part then rhymes with the last part of verse 11 (see Table 1.4). סֵלָה ends this direct address to YHWH and let the reader know there is a moment to reflect and a transition to follow.

#### 2.3.3.6. Dialogue interjected by YHWH (8a-9k)

Psalm 32:8a-9k introduces the dialogue by YHWH and is followed by ‘selah’ in verse 7. The direct tense of YHWH is found in verse 8 to 9 (Brown, 2004:36). The direct tense is not an interruption, but an interjection where the psalmist ‘receives guidance’ (Kirkpatrick (1921:161). Brueggemann (2007:3) describes the psalms as poems where the ‘I’ and ‘thou’ often meet, and ‘is the signal for change, not merely in the inner realm of consciousness but in the realm of outer events.’ It is, however, not only the ‘encounter’ between the psalmist and YHWH in Psalm 32 that ‘signals change’, but what happens at that encounter, that brings change. YHWH’s direct speech is also filled with metaphors and links to previous words in the text, that gave the readers a rich and nuanced understanding of the text. This passage also offers insights into how the splendour of forgiveness was understood by the psalmist. Verse 9 is the verse of warning against the folly of resisting God’s will (Kirkpatrick, 1921:161). This passage idiomatically reads as follows:

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<sup>118</sup> תְּסֻבְּבֵנִי can be parsed as a verb, Po’el imperfect second person masculine singular plus a suffixed pronoun first person singular. סֻבַּב can be translated as “to turn, to change, to surround or to go in a circle” according to Whitaker, et al. (1906).

Verse 8		Verse 9
אֲשַׁבֵּילְךָ֙ (I will instruct you)	—————	אֶל־תִּהְיֶה֩ (Do not + be)
וְאִוְרָךְ֙ (and I will teach you)	—————	בְּסוֹסִים֙ ([not] As + the horse)
בְּדַרְךְ־זוֹ֙ (In the way + that)	—————	בְּפָרָדִים֙ ([or not] as + a mule)
תֵּלֵךְ֙ (You shall go)	—————	אִין֙ (without)
אֶיטְעָצֶהָ֙ (I will guide)	—————	הֶבְיִין֙ (understanding)
עָלֶיךָ֙ (upon you)	—————	בְּמִתְגַּוְרָסָן֙ (With + bridle + and + rein)
עִינָיִי֙ (With my eye)	—————	פִּי־זֵוֹ֙ (His mouth)
		לְבָלוֹם֙ (To hold)
		בֹּלֵל֙ (not)
		קָרֵב֙ (To come near)
		אֵלַיִךְ֙ (Unto you)

Table 1.5

I will instruct you, and I will teach you in a way which you shall go.

Let me guide you with my eye upon you.

Do not be as the horse or the mule, without understanding,  
that needs his tackle: his bridle and rein for restraint to not come near unto you

Table 1.5 shows how verses 8 and 9 correlates. Although it corresponds thematically, it differs grammatically. Verse 8 contains three verbs in the imperfect, the first two in Hiph'il and the third in the Qal conjugation. 'I will instruct' (אֲשַׁבֵּילְךָ) doesn't have a prepositional clause as 'I will teach you' (וְאִוְרָךְ) has ('in the way that', בְּדַרְךְ־זוֹ). The prepositional clause is assumed. The translation of Psalm 32:8a then reads: 'I will instruct you in a way which you shall go, and I will teach you in a way which you shall go.' Verse 9 explains the inverse of verse 8, by using a horse and a mule as examples. In Table 1.5, one can see how these metaphors in verse 9 explain verse 8.

אֲשַׁבֵּילְךָ֙ וְאִוְרָךְ֙

I will instruct you and teach you

אֲשַׁכִּילְךָ<sup>119</sup> is translated as ‘I will instruct you’. As Hiph’il is causative, it translates as: ‘I will cause you to know’. The poet transitions to the present showcasing the contents of the song from YHWH. Note how he made room for the song of YHWH, and how the rest of the second part of the ‘Maskil’ would be poetically sound without including the song of YHWH (vv. 6-7 and 10-11). The psalmist used a technique that provides YHWH with the prime space within the psalm. He allows YHWH to take over, even in the middle of his ‘Maskil’.

Almost half of the appearances of שָׁכַל (twenty-eight) appears in the wisdom literature. שָׁכַל appears sixty-three times in the Hebrew Bible.

The correlation, as shown in Table 1.5 between verses 8 and 9, will be explained as the study looks at every word individually. שָׁכַל correlates with the second word in verse 9: קָסוּם (As the horse). Correlating these two words provides the reader with a new understanding of what the poet means. YHWH will instruct you, not as one instructs a horse. For the first audience, this correlation would have made sense. A horse receives training by hitting it with a horsewhip by his owner. YHWH will train people differently; he will not use force to teach. The last sentence of verse 9 explains how a horse is trained, namely with a bridle.

וְאָוֶרְךָ<sup>120</sup> is translated as ‘and teach you’. יָרָה<sup>121</sup> simply means to instruct or teach, according to Whitaker, et al. (1906). Like ‘instruct’ (שָׁכַל), ‘I will teach you’ וְאָוֶרְךָ is also in the Hiph’il imperfect and a causative action in the future. The poet again links verse 8 with verse 9 by indirectly contrasting YHWH’s teaching methods to that of a mule in verse 9. The last part of verse 9 explains how a mule is taught, with the rein.

### בְּדָרְךָ זֶה תִּלְמָד

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<sup>119</sup> אֲשַׁכִּילְךָ is a verb Hiph’il imperfect, first person singular and a suffixed pronoun, second person, masculine, singular. שָׁכַל is translated as “to have success”; “to understand or to comprehend” according to Whitaker, et al. (1906).

<sup>120</sup> וְאָוֶרְךָ consists of a conjunction; a Hiph’il verb, imperfect, first person singular and a suffixed pronoun, second person, masculine, singular.

<sup>121</sup> יָרָה is found throughout the Hebrew Bible, with the most appearances in Psalms (eleven), and secondly in Job (nine).

in the way that you should go.

In verse 8, בְּדַרְךְ־וְךָ is translated as ‘in the way that’. ‘In the way that’ (בְּדַרְךְ־וְךָ) consists of a preposition; noun singular, absolute and a conjunction. דַּרְךְ is a common word in the Hebrew language and means ‘road, way, distance, journey, manner, custom or behaviour’ according to Whitaker, et al. (1906). As this phrase in verse 8: בְּדַרְךְ־וְךָ (In the way + that) תֵּלֵךְ (You shall go) אֶיְעָצֶה (I will guide) will demonstrate to correlate with this phrase in verse 9 אֵין (without) הִבֵּינִי (Understanding), the reason they correlate is as follows: Deciding on where to go, was one of the critical decisions one had to take in the first community. It was not a decision quickly taken and inevitably had to follow through once started. Whenever a journey decision or planning for a decision was mentioned, the understanding was at the forefront of this conversation. The same applies to this context. Having a promise of YHWH to guide you during one of the hardest decisions would create a feeling of safety and comfort in the first readers. He will guide ‘with’ understanding.

תֵּלֵךְ<sup>122</sup> is translated ‘you will go’. The poet here switches from using the Hiph’il to using the Qal.

אֶיְעָצֶה עִלְיָךְ עֵינַי:

I will advise you with my eye upon you.

אֶיְעָצֶה<sup>123</sup> is translated as ‘I will advise’. עִלְיָךְ<sup>124</sup> is translated as ‘upon you’. עֵינַי<sup>125</sup> is translated as ‘with my eye.’ עֵינַי has symbolic meanings as well; ‘spring,’ ‘appearance’ and ‘look.’ The poet chose not to use יָד<sup>126</sup> in this context, rather עֵינַי, which confirms the view that the poet did not see YHWH as someone that smites, preferably someone

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<sup>122</sup> תֵּלֵךְ consists of a Verb Qal imperfect second person masculine singular.

<sup>123</sup> אֶיְעָצֶה is a verb Qal imperfect first person singular cohortative. “עָצַע” means “to advise”, “to plan” or “to decide.” “עָצַע” appears eighty times in the Hebrew Bible and only fourteen times in wisdom literature.

<sup>124</sup> עִלְיָךְ consists of a preposition suffixed with a pronoun second person masculine singular.

<sup>125</sup> עֵינַי consists of a noun singular construct suffixed with a pronoun first person singular.

<sup>126</sup> יָד appears eight hundred and eighty-three times. Seventy-eight times in Genesis, seventy times in Ezekiel and sixty-six times in the Psalms. It is more common to find the “hand” of YHWH on people. יָד appears one thousand six hundred and twelve times in the Hebrew Bible.

that guides with his עֵינָי. The question arises on how this view of YHWH change when one considers how the first audience (or the peer-poets) viewed God. The psalmist writes from personal experience as his guiding method. The psalm does not aim to convey theological truths. But as the psalmist tries to share his/her experience, he/she succeeded to change some discourse in his/her time around YHWH. However, Kraus (1992:155) notes: ‘The one who has been persecuted by the ‘wicked ones’ is certain that YHWH’s eyes ‘are toward the righteous’ (Ps 34:15). Note the distinction that YHWH’s eyes ‘are towards the righteous’ versus, like in Psalm 32:8, YHWH’s eyes are ‘upon’ the psalmist. Thus, the psalmist still introduces a new concept to the first audience.

אַל-תִּהְיֶה כָּסוּס בְּפָרֶד אֵין הָבִין

Do not be like a horse or like a mule, without understanding;

Rodd (2007:364) correctly notes that ‘one of the delightful features of the psalms is the large number of references to animals.’ They are God’s creatures who offer their own praise to him, but they also offer metaphors for different divine and human actions and characteristics (Rodd, 2007:364). One such example can be found in Psalm 32:9.

אַל-תִּהְיֶה is translated as ‘do not be’. With these words, verse 9 acts as the antithesis of verse 8, and it is for this reason that verses 8 and 9 correlate. Statements in verse 8 find a motif portraying its antitheses in verse 9. The poet uses motifs in verse 9 that captures the imagination of the first audience with motifs known to them.

כָּסוּס<sup>127</sup> is translated as ‘as a horse’. As was stated earlier, horses were handled in a certain way in the time this poem was written. Horses were mostly hit by their owners, with a bridle in their mouth, eye patches to keep them focused and forced to do what their owners want them to do. YHWH conveys a message here to the people, saying: ‘however one thinks of the handling of a horse, ‘without understanding and with a bridle’, is not how I think of someone or handles him/her, one should be with understanding and without a bridle.’ It correlates with verse 8 in this regard that one

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<sup>127</sup> כָּסוּס is a preposition and a noun singular absolute. סוּס appears one hundred and forty times in the Hebrew Bible, with the most appearances in second Kings. סוּס is also the word mostly translated as “horse” or “horses”.

does not need to be without understanding, as YHWH says: 'I will instruct you' (אֲשַׁכֵּילְךָ).

כִּפְרֵד<sup>128</sup> is translated as '[or] as a mule'. Longman & Enns (2008:16-17) argue that mules 'were domesticated in early antiquity, generally to serve as beasts of burden'. Longman & Enns focuses on the difference between the wild donkeys that enjoy their freedom while its domesticated cousin is often characterised by stubbornness and ill-discipline. Longman & Enns refers specially to Psalm 32:9, where they see the text as a warning 'against imitating the foolish, uncontrollable nature of the mule.' This assessment enhances the fact humankind shouldn't be without understanding, and should have to be, as YHWH says: 'I will instruct you' (אֲשַׁכֵּילְךָ).

Furthermore, 'mule' (פֶּרֶד) appears in eleven books, with an average appearance of one per book. 'Mule' (פֶּרֶד) is frequently used as a synonym for 'horse' (סוּס), where the author highlights a statement. One time where 'mule' (פֶּרֶד) is not used as a synonym for 'horse' (סוּס), is when Absalom died. Psalm 32 is written by or to David. Thus, the story of David and his sons was a known event to the author and first readers. Engaging in this instance is that 'mule' (פֶּרֶד) correlates with 'rein' and might refer to the one time in history that a mule was prominent; when Absalom hung between heaven and earth from his hair (2 Samuel 18:9). 'Mule' (פֶּרֶד) is the antecedent of וְאֶנְחֵלְךָ (and I will teach you) in verse 8, and it might refer to this lesson taught to Absalom. What the lesson is, is be acceptable to instruction. In keeping the crafty and skilled writing style of the psalmist into consideration, the psalmist let the audience see the value of instruction and be reminded of what instruction David has gone through to be king.

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<sup>128</sup> כִּפְרֵד is a preposition and a noun singular absolute. פֶּרֶד have fifteen appearances in thirteen verses.

וְאֵין<sup>129</sup> is translated as ‘without’. The author emphasises the absence of ‘understanding’ using וְאֵין. Instead of using a subtler word like לֹא, the author chose וְאֵין. The use of the emphatic ‘without’ (וְאֵין), enhances the motif and importance of instruction in verse 8 and 9.

וְהָבִין<sup>130</sup> in verse 9 is translated as ‘understanding.’ The Hiph’il demonstrates causative action, and thus the author’s initial message can also be translated as: ‘Do not be (that is, exist), without [to be caused] to understand.’ The author might point the reader into a deeper understanding of his/her own purpose. Here the psalmist is giving YHWH’s words through a poem to the audience, where YHWH is saying to the first readers: ‘Without understanding how I (YHWH) deal with you and your purpose, your existence (in the Hebrew culture) might be in jeopardy.’ That is why this phrase in verse 8 correlates where YHWH says: ‘בְּדַרְדְּרוֹנִי (In the way + that) תֵּלֵךְ (You shall go) אֶיְעָצֶנָּה (I will guide). Making sure that each person ‘exists’ (in accordance with Hebrew culture).

בְּמִתְגַּוְרֵסוֹ וְרֵסוֹ עֲדֵיו לְבָלוֹם

that needs his tackle—bridle and rein—for restraint

בְּמִתְגַּוְרֵסוֹ<sup>131</sup> is translated as ‘with bridle and rein’. The phrase refers to an everyday object that is part of the primary audience’s lives. It is however not a common word in the Hebrew Bible and is found once in Kings, Psalms, Proverbs and Isaiah. Longman (2008:16) notes that ‘the need to control a horse with bit and bridle (Ps 32:9) or whip (Prov. 26:3) is cited as a warning against insufficient self-control or foolishness.’ This contrasts someone that is ‘guided by the eye’ of YHWH in verse 8.

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<sup>129</sup> וְאֵין is a noun singular construct. According to Whitaker, et al. (1906) וְאֵין means “nothing, without, non-existence, not or no.”

<sup>130</sup> וְהָבִין is a verb, Hiph’il, infinitive, construct. הָבִין means to “understand”, “see”, “to pay attention”, “consider”, “teach” or “examine” (Strong, 1890). Koehler & Baumgartner (2000b:476) defines הָבִין simpler than Strong (1980): to ‘have/get understanding, intelligence’ and highlights three verses where הָבִין means something similar: Is. 29:16, Ps 32:9, Da 10:12.

<sup>131</sup> מִתְגַּוְרֵסוֹ is a noun, singular, absolute. It is from an unused root that means “to curb”. מִתְגַּוְרֵסוֹ is a preposition that means “in, at, among, upon, with, away from or when”.



וְ means ‘then’, ‘and’, ‘or’, ‘together with’ or ‘that is’. Both מָתַג and רָסַן<sup>132</sup> means ‘to curb’. The psalmist highlights the motif of ‘control’ for the primary audience. This audience understands the purpose of ‘control’, and a scenario starts to play out where someone needed to ‘control’ a horse. In this instance, the psalmist then distorts this motif in the mind of the primary audience by putting him-/herself in the place of the horse.

The scenario of a controlled horse that the author created in the mind of the first audience serve as a contrast with the image of God directing ‘with his eye’. Notice the similarity and differences in these two images. Both have to do with the face, but the one action is forceful, and the other action is forceless.

עֲדָיו<sup>133</sup> is translated as ‘his tackle’, ‘his mouth’ or ‘his mouth-ornaments’. The ‘tackle’ (עֲדָיו) is not usually used regarding an animal. In Exodus, this word is used three times, referring to people that mourn and not putting on their ‘tackle’ (עֲדָיו). ‘Tackle’ (עֲדָיו) is often used in a context of ‘vanity’, in luxury but with no lasting joy. לִבְלוֹם<sup>134</sup> in verse 9 is translated as ‘to hold’. The author, in this instance, demonstrates his skilful artistry in the way he uses unique words<sup>135</sup>.

בֵּל קָרַב אֵלַיךְ:

or he would not come near you.

בֵּל is translated as ‘not’. לֹא is a negation. קָרַב<sup>136</sup> is translated as ‘to come near.’ The author differentiates between the Lord and ‘trouble’. In verse 8, it is seen that proximity is preferred, using terms like ‘instruct’ and ‘keep my eye upon you’. In verse

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<sup>132</sup> רָסַן means ‘rein,’ and is also from an unused root meaning “to curb”, and by implication to ‘curb’ the jaw of the animal. רָסַן appears four times in the Hebrew Bible, twice in Job, and once in Psalms and Isaiah each.

<sup>133</sup> עֲדָיו is a noun, singular construct and pronoun, singular third person, masculine, singular.

<sup>134</sup> לִבְלוֹם is a preposition and a verb Qal infinitive construct.

<sup>135</sup> This is the only appearance in the Hebrew Bible of לִבְלוֹם. לִבְלוֹם is also a primitive root.

<sup>136</sup> קָרַב is a verb Qal infinitive construct.

9, the author manages to illustrate to the audience that proximity to negative details should be avoided, with the word **אֵלַיְךָ**. קָרֵב<sup>137</sup> is translated as ‘unto you.’

### 2.3.3.7. Final warning and call to worship (10a-11f)

Psalm 32:10a-11f is the last warning and call to worship. Verses 10 and 11 is linked by similar motifs to verses 6 and 7 that calls for prayer (see Table 1.4). Whereas Psalm 32:5 requests for a form of worship, namely prayer, it also addresses dangers that the audience faces. In verses 8 and 9, where the psalmist interjected YHWH’ words, the author sees YHWH as the refuge and answer to both physical and spiritual protection when the splendour of forgiveness is understood. Kirkpatrick (1921:161) summarizes verse 10 and 11 as the verses where a ‘lot of the godly and wicked’ aspects are contrasted and concludes with ‘an exhortation to the righteous to rejoice’. This passage idiomatically reads as follows:

Many [are the] sorrows of the wicked,  
 but he who trusts in the YHWH: loyal love surrounds him  
 Be glad in YHWH and rejoice, you righteous, and shout, all you upright in heart!

רְבִים מְכַאוֹבִים לְרָשָׁע וְהַבּוֹטֵחַ בַּיהוָה חֶסֶד יְסֻבְּבֵנוּ:

<b>Psalm 32:5</b>	<b>Psalm 32:10</b>
חַטָּאתַי (My sin)	
אֹדִיעֶךָ (I acknowledge)	
וְעוֹנֵי (And my iniquity)	
לֹא־כִסֵּיתִי (I did not hide)	
אָמַרְתִּי (I said)	
אֹדָה (‘I will confess)	
עָלַי (concerning)	
פְּשָׁעִי (my transgression)	
לַיהוָה (To YHWH’)	
וְאַתָּה (And You)	[רָק] (Surely)]
נָשָׂאתָ (you forgave)	רַבִּים (Many)
עוֹן (the iniquity)	מְכַאוֹבִים (Sorrows)
חַטָּאתַי (of my sin)	לְרָשָׁע (Of the wicked)
:סֵלָה (Selah)	וְהַבּוֹטֵחַ (But he who trusts)
	בַּיהוָה (In the Lord)
	חֶסֶד (Loyal love)
	:יְסֻבְּבֵנוּ (Surrounds him)

Table 1.6

<sup>137</sup> אֵלַיְךָ is a preposition and a pronoun second person masculine singular suffixed.

Table 1.6 shows how verse 5 and verse 10 correlates. Verse 5a mentioned actions taken by the author. Those actions were:

- I made known my sin to you, and my iniquity I did not cover. I said, ‘I will confess concerning my transgressions to YHWH,’

In verse 10a, those actions are summarised as:

- Many are the pains of the wicked

Verse 5b showcases the work of YHWH despite the efforts of the psalmist:

- but you took away the guilt of my sin. Selah

Verse 10b gives the reason why someone shouldn’t focus on their efforts, as the author did, but rather do the following:

- but for the one who trusts YHWH loyal love surrounds him.

The analysis of verses 10 and 11 will showcase a final warning to the readers, followed by a call to worship, taking into consideration what happened in the life of the psalmist.

רַבִּים מְכַאוֹבִים לְיָשָׁע

Many are the pains of the wicked

רַבִּים<sup>138</sup> is translated as ‘many’ and is an attributive adjective to ‘sorrows’ (מְכַאוֹבִים). It correlates with the four verbs found at the beginning of verse 5, describing the actions taken by the author in his attempt to earn forgiveness. It also correlates closely with the words of verse 6: ‘in a flood’ (לְשֹׁטָף). A flood is considered abundant, more than needed, to the point of destruction. The same is true of using ‘many’ רַבִּים, referring to amounts of sorrows that are experienced by the wicked. ‘Many’ (רַבִּים) means ‘abundant’ in quantity, size, age, number, rank or quality. ‘Many’ (רַבִּים) is a

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<sup>138</sup> רַבִּים is an adjective masculine plural absolute.

short form of רָבַב that means ‘to cast together’ (Strong, 1890). רָבַב is a common word in the Hebrew Bible<sup>139</sup>.

מְכַאוֹבִים<sup>140</sup> is translated as ‘sorrows.’ It means ‘anguish’ or ‘affliction’ and stems from כָּאַב which means ‘to feel pain’, and by implication ‘to grieve’, ‘spoil’, ‘have pain’, ‘make sad’ or ‘be sorrowful’. The psalmist refers to specific ‘sorrows’ (מְכַאוֹבִים) that indicates that the pain the wicked experiences, is self-inflicted. ‘Sorrows’ correlates with ‘waters’ (מַיִם) in verse 6, because both adjectives suggest abundance, ‘in a flood’ (לְשֹׁטֶף) and ‘many’ (רַבִּים). Water to the primary audience is a symbol of sustained life, and here the author synonymous with ‘water’ and ‘sorrows’. The key might be seen in using ‘flood of water’. The author doesn’t view ‘sorrow’ as something that should be avoided at all costs, rather than ‘many sorrows’ and especially ‘sorrows of the wicked’ should be avoided. It refers to the actions the author took to get forgiven in verse 5.

לְרָשָׁע<sup>141</sup> is the propositional clause to מְכַאוֹבִים and is translated as ‘of the wicked.’ רָשָׁע is common in wisdom literature, due to the nature of the word, not classifying someone as a sinner, instead as ‘morally wrong’. ‘Concerning’ (עָלַי) ‘my transgression’ (לְרָשָׁע) ‘to YHWH’ (לַיהוָה) in verse 5 correlates with ‘of the wicked’ (לְרָשָׁע) in verse 10. The author is referring to himself as wicked for trying to earn forgiveness freely given by YHWH. The following phrase (‘but he who trusts’, וְהַבֹּטֵחַ) is the answer to the psalmist’s mistaken conception. In using this phrase, the author encourages and reminds him-/herself to trust in YHWH to be ‘surrounded by loyal love’.

וְהַבֹּטֵחַ בַּיהוָה חֶסֶד יְסֻבֵּבֵנוּ:

but for the one who trusts YHWH loyal love surrounds him.

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<sup>139</sup> רָבַב appears four hundred and fifty-eight times, and appearing mostly in Psalms, with fifty-seven times.

<sup>140</sup> מְכַאוֹבִים is a noun masculine plural absolute.

<sup>141</sup> לְרָשָׁע is a preposition, an article, an adjective singular absolute. רָשָׁע means “morally wrong, concretely a bad person”. It stems from רָשָׁע which means “to be wrong”. רָשָׁע appears two-hundred and sixty-three times in the Hebrew Bible. It appears mostly in Psalms and Proverbs, with eighty and seventy-seven times respectfully.

This phrase is can be summarised as “the pious individual recognizes that he/she stands under the guidance of divine faithfulness in his/her life” (Wildberger, 1997:240). Wildberger (1997:240) highlights three times where the same words were used with the same meaning: Genesis 24:49; Psalm 32:10 and 2 Samuel 2:6. The ‘guidance of divine faithfulness’ in this context refers to the splendour of forgiveness that the psalmist now realises is available to him/her.

וְהַבּוֹטָח<sup>142</sup> in verse 10 is translated as ‘but he who trusts.’ The conjunction is translated as ‘then’, ‘and’, ‘or’, ‘together with’, or ‘that is’. בטח is translated as ‘to trust’, ‘to be confident’ or ‘unsuspecting’. Half of the hundred and twenty of the appearances of ‘to trust’ (בטח) is in Proverbs (ten appearances), the Psalms (forty-six appearances) and Job (four appearances). ‘But he whom trusts’ (בטח)<sup>143</sup> in verse 10 correlates thematically with ‘are my hiding place’ (סִתְּרָה) in verse 7. A hiding place to the first audience is something that they would be familiar with. They would see how vital a useful hiding place would be. A place cannot be a hiding place without one trusting that place to be secure.

In verse 10, בַּיהוָה is translated as ‘in the Lord.’ בַּיהוָה is a preposition and a noun proper masculine singular absolute. The psalmist correlates thematically with ‘you’ (אַתָּה) in verse 7, as both refer to YHWH. Trust depends on where one put it in. The first audience, surrounded by a physical world, and not confronted with abstract concepts like trust, will now understand what trust means when thematically correlated with ‘a hiding place in You (the Lord).’

חֶסֶד is translated as ‘loyal love.’ חֶסֶד is a noun singular absolute. In verse 6 the author spoke about ‘in a flood (לְשֹׁטָף) ‘Of great’ (רַבִּים) ‘waters,’ (מַיִם) ‘but unto you’ (אֵלַי) ‘not’ (לֹא) ‘do come near’ (יִגָּעוּ:). Here the author continues his thoughts and replaces the ‘water that will not come near’ with ‘loyal love’ (חֶסֶד) that will surround the reader

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<sup>142</sup> וְהַבּוֹטָח is a phrase consisting of a conjunction (ו), an article (ה) and a verb Qal participle masculine singular absolute.

<sup>143</sup> בטח appears one hundred and twenty times in the Hebrew Bible.

(if he/she trusts) in YHWH. תִּסְבְּבוּ appears two-hundred and forty-seven times in the Hebrew Bible, and one-hundred and twenty-seven times in the Psalms. תִּסְבְּבוּ stems from סָבַב which means ‘to bow’, or ‘to be kind’. תִּסְבְּבוּ introduces a conditional clause (‘loyal love will surround him’), and the condition to be met is that ‘he/she trusts YHWH’. יִסְבְּבֵנוּ<sup>144</sup> is translated as ‘surrounds him.’

שִׂמְחוּ בַיהוָה וְגִילוּ צְדִיקִים

Be glad in YHWH and rejoice, you righteous,

שִׂמְחוּ<sup>145</sup> is translated as ‘Be glad.’ Verse 11 ends in the same way that verse 6 started, and it completes this ‘call to praise’. In verse 6, the author wrote: ‘pray’ (יְתַפְּלֵל) ‘all the faithful/godly’ (כָּל־חֹסֵיד) ‘unto you’ (אֵלַיךָ). More than a third of the times שִׂמְחוּ<sup>146</sup> appears in the psalms. Using this word<sup>147</sup> by the psalmist calls the primary audience to be glad in the wake of what was just said. Due to the testimony of the psalmist, he now believes that what he said was enough to convince the audience that they are now ‘righteous’ and ‘upright in heart’. If they believe (as the author suggest they should), they are now called to be glad. Note the author used the imperative Qal form here, commanding them to be glad. The author understands how forgiveness works, and that he experienced forgiveness, and due to him now calling the first audience to experience how this forgiveness works. Note the author does not call the audience now to repent, or to bring a sacrifice, rather rejoice.

בַּיהוָה<sup>148</sup> is translated as ‘in YHWH.’ The preposition is a preposition of place. The author signals to the first audience that the symbolic place of their ‘gladness’, that is, the origin, should be ‘in YHWH’. The author clearly states the rejoicing should not be the effort of everyone in the first audience, rather in YHWH. Although there are

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<sup>144</sup> יִסְבְּבֵנוּ is a verb Po’el imperfect third person masculine singular and a pronoun third person masculine singular suffixed.

<sup>145</sup> שִׂמְחוּ is a verb Qal imperative second person masculine plural.

<sup>146</sup> “To be glad” (שִׂמְחוּ) appears one-hundred and fifty-five times in the Hebrew Bible and fifty-two times in the Psalms.

<sup>147</sup> . It means “to brighten up”, “to cheer up”, “to have joy” or “to make merry or rejoice.”

<sup>148</sup> בַּיהוָה is a preposition and a noun proper masculine singular absolute.

numerous reasons to rejoice and to be glad, the more significant reason of them all is to rejoice in YHWH. Throughout the 'Maskil', the author revealed how this one experience led him to experience various emotions, it led him think about forgiveness, transgression, sin, iniquity, his spirit, guile, his bones, his roaring, day and night, moisture (life), summer, confession, prayer, YHWH, water, floods, hiding place, trouble, songs, instruction, guidance, YHWH's eye, horse, mule, bit and bridle, sorrows, the wicked, mercy and the Lord. After touching on all these topics, his closing argument is to be glad in the Lord.

וַיִּגִּילוּ<sup>149</sup> is translated as 'and rejoice you.' Westermann (1997b:431) correctly notes that people are predominantly the subject of the verb.<sup>150</sup> He argues accurately that God's praise always has the tendency to broaden itself. This becomes clear in verse 11, as the second time a call to worship is given, 'all' is included. Later texts show that God also "rejoices".<sup>151</sup> It is translated as 'spinning around'. The author has no regard for people that only try to 'seem holy'. He calls the 'righteous' to dance. Note that the author now addresses the 'upright in heart', where he by inference called himself 'wicked'. One can see the growth taken place by the author in this regard. Note that both the first and the second verbs should be read together as they agree in conjugation, mode, person and number. This is a device in Hebrew poetry, where two similar verbs are mentioned, followed by different adjectives, but both adjectives apply to both verbs. Thus:

Be glad in YHWH  
Rejoice in YHWH  
Be glad all you upright in heart  
Rejoice you all upright in heart.

צַדִּיקִים<sup>152</sup> is translated as 'righteous.' By using צַדִּיק, the author acknowledges there can be someone 'righteous'. For the first audience, this might be a new thought they might see themselves as 'righteous', and by being glad, they acknowledge they understand the message of the author and know that they can call themselves צַדִּיקִים.

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<sup>149</sup> וַיִּגִּילוּ is a conjunction and a verb Qal imperative Masculine second person plural.

<sup>150</sup> See Westermann (1997b:431).

<sup>151</sup> Isa 65:19; Zeph 3:17.

<sup>152</sup> צַדִּיקִים is an adjective masculine plural absolute. צַדִּיק appears fifty times in the Psalms, and sixty-six times in Proverbs, and two-hundred and six times in the Hebrew Bible.

Kraus (1992:69) suggest the call to individually the ‘righteous’ to ‘shout’ is in line with the request to gather at Zion found in other places in the *Psalter*. This demonstrates Psalm 32 formed part of the cultic life. When studied the entirety of the psalms, Kraus (1992:155) concluded righteousness as the following: ‘That person is ‘righteous’ whose innocence has been demonstrated by YHWH's verdict of not guilty, which refutes all accusations and shows they are baseless.’

וְהִרְנְנוּ כָּל-יִשְׂרָאֵל לֵב:

and shout for joy, all you upright of heart.

וְהִרְנְנוּ<sup>153</sup> is translated as ‘And shout.’ Not only is the author asking the צְדִיקִים to ‘dance’, but also to וְהִרְנְנוּ. The author wants the audience to experience the joy he felt after he excepted forgiveness, and the only means he can think of is to ask the audience just to ‘be glad’ and accept this forgiveness. כָּל-יִשְׂרָאֵל לֵב<sup>154</sup> is translated as ‘All you upright in heart.’

## 2.4. Synthesis

In this chapter, it became evident that the skilful artistry of the psalmist showcased the nuance that Psalm 32 adds to the splendour of forgiveness as understood in the Hebrew Bible. The *genre* of Psalm 32 is that of thanksgiving, en its *Sitz im Leben* is to thank God for the salvation from sin through forgiveness.

The structure of Psalm 32 illustrated how Psalm 32 could be translated according to this study. The outline that followed described major themes of Psalm 32 that were discussed in the detailed analysis. These significant themes also represent the various stages the psalmist experienced before, during and after forgiveness and will serve as the basis for the diachronic analysis in Chapter 3 and the theological summary in Chapter 4.

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<sup>153</sup> וְהִרְנְנוּ is a conjunction and a verb Hiph'il imperative second person masculine plural.

<sup>154</sup> כָּל-יִשְׂרָאֵל לֵב is a noun singular construct, an adjective masculine plural construct and a noun singular absolute.



## CHAPTER 3 – DIACHRONIC ANALYSIS

### 3.1. Introduction

In Chapter 2, the study explored the nuance of forgiveness that Psalm 32 adds by explicitly studying the text as found in the BHS, called a synchronic study. In this chapter, the second objective of the study is to execute a diachronic analysis of Psalm 32 to understand the history and the *Sitz im Leben* of Psalm 32. The history of Psalm 32 includes the redactional history and the tradition history. A diachronic study of the text will examine the nuance of forgiveness that Psalm 32 adds further.

This chapter studies the historical *Sitz im Leben*, tradition history and redactional history. Furthermore, the redactional history focuses on the formation Psalm 32 into its current form, its placement in the section of Psalms 25-34 as well as in the first book of the *Psalter*, Psalms 1-41.

### 3.2. Historical *Sitz im Leben*

The importance of finding the *Sitz im Leben* of a psalm is summarised by Burnett & Tucker (2007:xiii): ‘The vital link among the world behind the text, the world of the text, and the world of readers is, after all, the text.’ Burnett & Tucker (2007:xiii) further explain that ‘the text is thus central to broaden perspectives; it facilitates readings that seek to account for ethical concerns, for the experience of the Divine, and the life of faith communities, on the part of the text and its readers.’

According to Lawrence (1996:805): ‘The psalm may originally have been used in ceremonies of confession or cleansing in the Temple,’ and associates its origin and use with the post-exilic synagogue, for example, Ezra 9, Nehemiah 9 and Daniel 9.

Potgieter (2014:1) argues that ‘on the basis of a structural analysis, that Psalm 32 should be understood as a homogeneous wisdom composition.’ Bellinger (2014:322) argues that some psalms often categorised as wisdom texts, raise questions about life and exhibit connections to the tradition of lamenting (Pss 32, 37, 49, 73, 78). Botha (2014:1) on the other hand, argues that ‘it was devised from the beginning as a wisdom-teaching psalm although it simulates the form of a psalm of thanksgiving in certain respects.’ This study follows the argument of Botha (2014:1): Psalm 32 is a wisdom-teaching psalm because of links it has with similar vocabulary shared with

wisdom texts as shown in the study. Thanksgiving aspects are found in the text (vv. 1, 2, 6, 7, 11), along with by elements of prayer (vv. 5, 6, 7).

With regards to whom the author of Psalm 32 was, the author(s), according to Gillingham (2014:206), was part of the 'Levite singers' and sets the table for the discussion regarding forgiveness. Gillingham (2014:206) argues that if the Levites' role was to teach the law and sing the Psalms of David, they could have an influence on the Psalms. The Levites would have influenced the Psalms in a didactic way, and it explains why there is a didactic element in so many Psalms (Pss 4, 7, 9, 12, 25, 27, 28, 30, 31, 32, 55, 102, and 130).

The audience of Psalm 32, according to Berlin (2007:71-72), is the praying community. She correctly argues that 'while the implied audience of prayers is God, the real audience is the praying community.' Berlin (2007:72) further argues appropriately that for the psalm to be meaningful, it should 'reflect the ideology and values of the community.'

Psalm 32, probably written by Levite(s), found its *Sitz im Leben* in the prayer community, whether that be in the temple or cultic or family life.

### 3.2.1. Introduction to the splendour of forgiveness (Ps 32:1)

לְדָוִד מִשְׁכִּיל אֲשֶׁר־יָשׁוּי־פָשַׁע בְּסוּי חַטָּאָה

Of David. A Maskil. [A1a] Happy is he whose transgression is taken away,  
[A1b] whose sin is covered.

In Psalm 32:1, one saw the psalm is written to David, a 'Maskil'. The first faith community understood this sentence as: 'to a beloved person to 'behave himself wisely'. The motif of forgiveness starts to be unravelled when אֲשֶׁר־יָשׁוּי is used. The first faith community understood the nuance of אֲשֶׁר־יָשׁוּי that means to be 'straight' and refers to the joy when forgiveness is received. The first three words of Psalm 32, the context for love, wisdom and happiness is created. This few words could lead the first and following communities to classify the psalm and determine uses for the psalm.

יָשׁוּי that means forgiven is a common word in the Hebrew Bible and continually refers to an upward movement, like 'lifted up', or 'take up'. The motif that comes to mind is that of a heavy burden that is removed from someone. Consequence faith

communities might have seen the forgiveness of sin in the same way; sin is the weight that weighs people down. Drawing the images that are being created in the mind of the first audience, help the modern reader better understand the nuances involved in every stage of this psalm. All the images created in Psalm 32 needs to be examined in this fashion to illustrate the nuance of the image of the splendour of forgiveness.

So far in the synchronic analysis, the study saw the psalm is written to a loved one, and it is written with a purpose of wisdom in mind. The psalmist now equates someone whose sins are forgiven with someone who is אֲשֶׁרִי (happy), with the root word of meaning ‘straight’ or ‘to go forward’. Central to the motif the psalmist is building in the minds of the first and consequence audiences is of a person, and as the ‘Maskil’ progresses, this person receives more information.

The poet now describes this person as someone that a burden has just been lifted from, in explaining that this person is now נְשׂוּי (forgiven). The word-choice of the psalmist for the word for sin is noteworthy. The psalmist used the feminine form of the root word חָטָא that can mean ‘to miss’. The first and consequences audiences then sits with the two opposing thoughts in their head, of a person (unnamed and unclassified), that currently ‘go forward’ or ‘are happy or blessed’, that used to ‘go skew’ or ‘not be happy’. Now, this equation is building in the first and consequence audiences, and the poet explains the change in mindset, ‘forgiveness’, the ‘lifting up’. The question now arises about what must be lifted and if it is guilt or punishment, or something else.

### 3.2.2. Introduction to the splendour of forgiveness (Ps 32:2)

אֲשֶׁרִי אָדָם לֹא יִחַשֵׁב יְהוָה לוֹ עֲוֹן וְאִין בְּרוּחַו רְמִיָה:

A2a [2] Happy is a person to whom YHWH does not impute iniquity

A2b and in whose spirit there is no deceit.

In verse 2, the next phase in the ‘Maskil’, the psalmist introduces YHWH and demonstrates how these two characters make contact for the first time in the mind of the primary and subsequent audiences. The psalmist uses the same word, אֲשֶׁרִי, to describe this unknown person starting to take form in the mind of the primary and subsequent audiences. אֲשֶׁרִי as seen in Ps 32:2a, has a long tradition associated with

it and used in the psalms in themes of 'provision', 'Relationship with God', 'Dealt with sin' and 'Trust in God'. The first and subsequent audiences might now expect the theme of this psalm to be in the same direction. As the psalmist addresses the unknown person in verse 1, it is only part of a construct in  $\text{יְשׁוּעָה}$ . In verse 2, however, the psalmist uses a word with a strong tradition in both the psalms and in the Hebrew Bible. The Hebrew Bible addresses the value of man (Gen 1:26-27 and Ps 32:2b). The tone for the understanding of man is also set (Ps 8:4). This provides the modern reader with a glimpse into how the first audience perceived the concept of 'man', or 'mankind'.

The psalmist created difficulties when he/she created the next motif in the minds of the first audience. For YHWH not to  $\text{יְהַשֵּׁב}$ , for the modern reader, this poses some difficulties. The question arises if YHWH usually imputes iniquity and how the psalmist knows it is YHWH imputing the iniquity. By this statement, it is safe to deduce the first, and subsequent audiences excepted iniquities could be ascribed to YHWH. Instead of impugning YHWH's character, it slightly enhances YHWH's might.

As seen in the seventh word of verse 2, the psalmist addresses 'iniquity' in a singular form. The study found three reasons for the unique form instead of the plural form: several of man's iniquities may be one; forgiveness can only be experienced per iniquity, or a poetic device to agree with 'humankind' ( $\text{בְּחַיִּימָא}$ ) in number. The study concluded that these three options are not mutually exclusive and that all can be true. The first audience and subsequent audiences were thus left with an exciting picture in their minds, much like a prism, placing the understanding of 'iniquity' just beyond their reach. The psalmist thus avoids placing the burden of guilt on the audience, and instead focus their attention on the splendour of forgiveness.

The psalmist continues to 'paint' the desired picture for the first audience and subsequent audiences. Next, he 'paints' a picture of a spirit without deceit. As the study previously has shown, there is a correlation with verse 9, where the psalmist paints a picture of a horse or a mule without understanding. In both instances, the psalmist uses a picture of something that the first audience would be familiar with, explicitly stating that the picture he is thinking of is without a component that the audience would assume is part of the picture. One can thus deduce the idea that the

psalmist, and the first audience and subsequent audiences to an extent, saw the spirit of man as full of deceit, as much as a horse and mule can be without understanding.

The study previously argued that in verse 2, Psalm 32 uses the word ‘spirit’ (רוּחַ) closer to its wisdom heritage than its *Psalter* understanding. רוּחַ is primarily understood as ‘wind’ in the *Psalter* but identified as ‘spirit of man’ in the wisdom literature. The first audience and subsequent audiences are confronted with the metaphorical use of רוּחַ. Immediately taking their mind to think of nature, and ‘wind’, but is then referred to ‘man’, and thus pointing to the ‘nature’ of man.

When the modern reader reads someone is happy in ‘whose spirit there is no deceit’, it is understandable. However, studying the original text, one sees an added nuance. Once again, the splendour of forgiveness in Psalm 32 is portrayed when the psalmist uses אֲשֶׁר־י to describe not only deceit but specific deceit regarding ‘YHWH’ (יְהוָה). The first audience and subsequent audiences should have been acquainted with the book of Job. As the study previously has shown, the motif in the mind of the primary audience and subsequent audiences is deceit when falseness about יְהוָה is portrayed as accurate. The psalmist thus told that not only is someone happy with no deceit in their spirit but specifically no deceit regarding ‘YHWH’ (יְהוָה). To fully comprehend the picture, the first audience and subsequent audiences had in their mind about the splendour of forgiveness; the study now demonstrates the understanding regarding ‘YHWH’ (יְהוָה) is of importance.

### 3.2.3. The agony without forgiveness (Ps 32:3)

כִּי־ הִחַרְשֵׁתִי בְּלוּ עַצְמִי בְּשִׂאֲגוֹתַי כָּל־ הַיּוֹם:

B1a [3] When I kept silent, my bones were worn out

B1b [my bones were worn out] due to my groaning all the day.

Starting with verse 3, the psalmist changes the tone of the message. The first audience and subsequent audiences are now taken from ‘happy’ and ‘blessed’, to ‘worn out’ and ‘groaning’. The psalmist starts here to share his own experience.

The psalmist starts this verse in one of the most precise and metaphorical ways possible. The psalmist uses 'silence' (הַחֲרָשָׁתִּי), as revealed in §2.3.3.3. The picture that would come to the mind of the first audience and subsequent audiences would be a plough. A plough represents silence, but as the psalmist chose to use the Hiph'il, the meaning changed to peace, which could be the plough 'caused' to till, or 'forced'. The causative meaning portrayed using the Hiph'il is continued in the next word, בָּלָו.

The psalmist expresses how his bones are 'worn out', 'used up', 'consumed' or 'enjoyed 'up''. The motif is formed by linking 'were worn out' (בָּלָו) with the previous theme, a 'forced tilling'. The idea receives enrichment by using בָּלָו, by giving it a reason, and adding a seemingly different nuance to it: 'pleasure'. The psalmist felt forced to keep silent due to the pleasure he had with his bones. One other option to explain the silence is made by Brown (2007:30), as he argues that it was the words that brought pain unto the psalmist, and the psalmist now tries to keep silent to avoid further pain. This summary, however, ignores the metaphorical use of the words of the psalmist.

The motif arises in mind of the first audience, and subsequent audiences need to be discussed. It is a motif of forced silence after pleasure. Now the psalmist completes this motif by drawing an image of what was used to perform this motif. This object used for fun is usually translated with 'bones' in English translations. The theme the psalmist painted for the first audience, and subsequent audiences need to be examined. As was mentioned previously in this study, עֲצָמַי refers to his innermost being, or spirit. Thus, in the mind of the first audience, they did not understand one's physical 'bones', rather a symbolic understanding of 'bones', an innermost being. Now the question arises about how does one experience pleasure that leads to destruction in one's spirit. This leads the study to the splendour of forgiveness. One needs forgiveness, without works, to experience complete forgiveness. Alternatively, one will experience the short-lived pleasure in your spirit, but that will lead to destruction.

As this picture is unfolding for the first audience and subsequent audiences, the audience sees this 'groaning', or 'pleasure that leads to destruction', taking place daily.

As the study already noted, this might add the dimension the truly damaging factor was it happened every day.

### 3.2.4. The agony without forgiveness (Ps 32:4)

כִּי יוֹמָם וְלַיְלָה תִכְבֵּד עָלַי יָדְךָ נְהַפְדָּה לְשִׁדְי בְּחַרְבֵּנִי קִיַּץ סִלָּה:

B2a [4] For day and night, your hand was heavy upon me.

B2b [For day and night] My vigour was changed  
into the dry heat of summer. Selah.

Verse 4 introduced the first audience was to a classic Hebrew poem style of repeating essential concepts. So, with the motif that was fresh to the first audience and subsequent audiences, of the poet experience displeasure after pleasure, the next phrase introduces the hand of YHWH. What is to follow, serves as a further explanation of the previous verse, hence using the popular כִּי is a conjunction that connects paragraphs, sentences, phrases and words.

The next motif starts to unfold for subsequent audiences with the word ‘daily’. If routine was part of subsequent audiences’ lives, the phrase ‘for daily’ (כָּל־הַיּוֹם) referred to tasks that repeat. What follows this phrase will automatically fall into the category of details that happen daily, such as fetching water, cleaning and praying. The ‘daily’ motif ‘daily’ (יוֹמָם) creates, is followed by the motif of ‘the night’. The study already revealed לַיְלָה creates a motif of someone being vulnerable in heightened danger, as well as giving someone time to reflect. Thus, the first audience would now understand what will follow is something happening ‘daily’ in a time that one is vulnerable and able to reflect,

That which occurred daily, and in the night, was the hand of YHWH which ‘was heavy’. As the study previously noted, תִּכְבֵּד correlates with the idea of הַחֲרִישָׁתִי (forced silence), as one needed a heavy hand to till. It is enhanced using עַל, that demonstrates proximity. The psalmist is painting an image for subsequent audiences of ploughing, then gradually applying that image in the abstract to his situation. The primary audience would now start to experience the immense pressure that the psalmist was in, and that using an everyday experience. The psalmist already indicated the way out

of this tremendous pressure is by forgiveness. Adding to the psalmist's understanding of the splendour of forgiveness.

The psalmist continues to paint this picture of what he experiences during the day and reflect on at night. He does not point to the face of YHWH, rather his יָדָאֵל (hand). The subsequent audiences saw 'hand' synonymous with work and may also denote distance. In using the יָדָאֵל of YHWH, he creates the space for the splendour of forgiveness to fill later. The possible motives for using the יָדָאֵל of YHWH has been explained earlier in the study.

While the psalmist was painting images in the minds of the first audience, he personalised all the images. Thus far, the following motifs were personal: 'I kept silent', 'my bones', 'my groaning', 'upon me', and now; 'my moisture'. The subsequent audiences see the motifs painted by the psalmist clearly, not only as someone's experience but are also able to put themselves in the theme. The psalmist started with general truths but changed it to personalise it in verse 3.

The first audience now has this motif in their minds of the hand of YHWH upon them or the psalmist, and the theme of vigour, or life, is added, and then the psalmist paints the setting of this vigour as 'drought' or 'dry heat'. By doing this, urgency for the need of the splendour of forgiveness is added. Life can survive in a drought, but not for long, and a motif of agitation and haste is painted, the subsequent audiences could experience the space that is created for the splendour of forgiveness. The subsequent audiences receive the setting of the drought as 'summer'. This setting, as noted earlier in the study, demonstrates God is not to blame for the situation and that none of the motifs is anyone's fault, instead of a result of how the world works. This does not take away the urgency of the need for the splendour of forgiveness but does take away the tendency of the audience to feel guilty.

After the first audience saw these intense, urgent and precise motifs, the psalmist provides time to process the new information using סָלָה.

### 3.2.5. Personal confession as a last resort (Ps 32:5)

חַטָּאתַי אֹדְעֵיךָ וְעֹנֵי לֹא- כַּסִּיתִי אֶמְרֹתַי אֹדְעָה עָלַי פִּשְׁעֵי לִיהוָה וְאַתָּה נִשְׁאַתָּ עָוֹן חַטָּאתַי סָלָה:

C1a [5] I made known my sin to you,



C1b and my iniquity I did not cover.

C2a I said, 'I will confess concerning my transgressions to YHWH,'

C2b but you took away the guilt of my sin. Selah

As time runs out, the psalmist tries to take four actions: אֶדְבַּרְךָ (I acknowledge), לֹא־כִסִּיתִי (I did not hide), אָמַרְתִּי (I said) and אֶדְבַּרְךָ (I will confess). As noted earlier, the psalmist seems confused, using an array of tenses, positively and negatively. Moreover, as he tries to do or not to do these four actions, it serves as efforts to initiate the receiving of the splendour of forgiveness. The study will examine the motifs created using these four verbs. The guilt of his sin is then taken away 'after' the action of the psalmist, and not 'because' of the efforts of the psalmist.

The first motif created is of אֶדְבַּרְךָ ('I acknowledge' or 'I am caused to know'). Once again, the primary audience sees a theme of something 'forced'. Firstly, with the silence of the psalmist, secondly, with a plough, and thirdly, with acknowledge. The subsequent audiences see a motif of someone, 'forced to know' (by unknown circumstances) his own 'guilt' (עוֹן). 'Guilt' (עוֹן) creates the theme of something perverse. This is an abstract word, and for each member of the first audience, this gave them a different idea. 'Perverse' might mean something different to each member of the subsequent audiences. The argument, however, was made previously in the study it formed part as a synonym for חַטָּאתִי (my sin) and פְּשָׁעִי (my transgression), actions that God can forgive.

The image is enhanced by repainting the picture subsequent audiences and this time, using different words. The psalmist used the Pi'el form of כִּסָּה. In this motif, the option of trying to cover one's sin is excluded but trying to cover one's sin permanently is the motif created for subsequent audiences. This indicates that the psalmist might have tried to hide his sin but failed in covering it permanently. Giving up on his attempt to cover it up, he said (probably to himself): I will confess.

The next verb in verse 5, אֶדְבַּרְךָ, is translated as 'I will (let myself) confess', and as the study revealed, focuses on worship rather than on the feeling of guilt. The motif of YHWH's hand upon him should still be imagined by subsequent audiences. אֶדְבַּרְךָ also shares the same stem as 'hand', and for subsequent audiences, this poetry would

have been noticed. Instead of hiding for the heavy hand of YHWH, he also extends his hands back to YHWH, this time in confession. He confesses this time his *עֲוֹן*, a different word for sin than used before. The subsequent audiences would notice here that this piece is written for all theological settings, and not exclusive to a group.

The next motif the psalmist painted for subsequent audiences, was forgiving. The structural analysis of this word has been done in the previous chapter (Diachronic analysis), now the study needs to answer the following question: The motif that the word *נָשָׂא* paint in the minds of the subsequent audiences, and what is the synchronic meaning of the concept *נָשָׂא* (you forgave) is, needs to be examined. The motif 'to take away' (*נשא*) usually paints is of something lifted. Comparatively, to the previous motif created in verse 4 of a hand pressing down, one can now see the 'guilt' is raised. The concept of lifting also equals a state of relaxation, of being able to breathe (or live) again. The image for subsequent audiences starts to brighten. If the subsequent audiences put themselves in the situation of the psalmist, they might have begun to experience YHWH's forgiveness ('lifting of guilt') in a real way. The motif is expanded using *עֲוֹן* (iniquity), which, as seen earlier in the study, is understood as 'rebellion'. And it was this rebellion lifted. This 'rebellion' was the result of his 'habitual sinfulness', and as YHWH lifts this 'guilt' or 'rebellion', the cause of this 'habitual sinfulness' is also raised. The subsequent audiences see a clear picture as what the root of the psalmist's situation was, and it might have shed light on their situation.

### 3.2.6. Call to prayer and example of prayer (Ps 32:6-7)

עַל-זֹאת יִתְפַּלֵּל כָּל-חֹסֵיד אֱלֹהִים לְעַת מְצָא רֶק לְשֹׁטֵף מִיָּם רַבִּים אֲלֵיו לֹא יִגִּיעוּ:

D1a [6] Therefore let all the faithful pray to you

D1b at the time for finding you.

D1c Surely at the flood of many waters they will not reach him.

אַתָּה סֹתֵר לִי מִצָּר תִּצְרֵנִי רַגְלִי פִּלֵּט תִּסּוּבְבֵנִי סֵלָה:

D2a [7] You are my hiding place from trouble.

D2b You preserve me with cries of deliverance.

D2c You surround me. Selah

As the first coherent motif has been drawn, the psalmist now places this motif against the wall of the memory of the subsequent audiences and starts to draw another

consistent picture in respect to the first image. The next motif forms an answer to the first one, and in an idealistic way, a perfect response according to the psalmist. The theme that is drawn starts with someone bowing their heads, with using the word יתפלל. It is כָּל־הַחֲסִידִים (all the faithful) that should bow their heads. The painting of this image is coherent due to repetitive patterns, revealed in a table earlier in the study. For instance, the same person(s) (those upright in heart, like ‘the faithful ones’) asked to bow their heads in verse 6, is invited to ‘rejoice’ and ‘be glad’ in verse 11.

As the study previously has shown, this event of praying, or the bowing of heads, should take place when the faithful feel like it. The subsequent audiences did not feel a command to start praying, instead of an invitation to pray when they feel the urge to pray. Lawrence (1996:286) argues that ‘prayer becomes a way of life for those who know that their accomplishments, capabilities and intension are always inadequate.’ This inadequacy that Lawrence (1996:286) mentions aligns with the invitation to pray: ‘Therefore, ‘let’ all the faithful pray to you.’

The next motif is a vivid image used in Psalm 32, to describe the splendour of forgiveness. By using the word ‘flood’, the poet takes subsequent audiences on an imaginative journey. Starting with the motif of a flood, and then telling the audience that ‘unto them, it will not reach’, offer the viewer a sigh of relieve. This motif enhances the motif has by this time in the ‘Maskil’ formed for subsequent audiences about forgiveness. The splendour of forgiveness entails the scare of imminent danger, followed by the peacefulness and relieve of ‘the lifting of guilt’ (forgiveness). This reduces the first audience experienced due to ‘a flood’ ‘not reaching them’, is written in the Hiph’il imperfect tense. The subsequent audiences did not see a motif of an ocean coming near and then retracting on its own. The Hiph’il demonstrates the flood was ‘caused’ to ‘not come near’ (יָגִיעוּ). This adds YHWH to the motif, intentionally causing the flood not to come near.

### 3.2.7. Dialogue interjected by YHWH (Ps 32:8)

אֲשַׁכִּילְךָ וְאוֹרְךָ בְּדַרְךְ־זֶנּוּ תִלְמָד אֶיְעָצֶה עָלֶיךָ עֵינַי:

E1a [8] I[b] will instruct you and teach you

E1b in the way that you should go.

E1c I will advise you with my eye upon you.

The next motif created for subsequent audiences was a 'journey'. The LEB translates בְּדַרְדָּרוֹ as 'in the way that', but for subsequent audiences, the motif was simpler to understand. It referred to a 'road, way, distance, journey, manner, custom or behaviour'. As noted earlier in the study, undertaking a journey was an important decision. The song that YHWH is singing over the psalmist (and by implication over the first audience) is YHWH will provide guidance when vital, life-changing decisions need to be taken. This guidance will happen by YHWH. The motif receives enhancement when the psalmist then diverts from the typical path of referring to the hand of YHWH as the guiding factor but instead changes the picture to YHWH's eye (עֵינָי). Now, before a journey starts, the first audience pictured all the elements involved at this moment. There is livestock that needs to be aligned, carriage to be loaded, and then the moment where the direction of the journey needs to be confirmed. Usually a time of great distress, and often disagreements, as some part of the travellers could have a different opinion. The subsequent audiences experience this scene multiple times, and now the astonishment when YHWH could guide them, but YHWH says He will not shout louder than other travellers, or even use His hand to guide, He will guide by only keeping His eye on the traveller.

The antitheses of this theme for subsequent audiences is changed. It changed to illustrate the part they should play in the previous theme. This picture consists of a collage of images that they should not be like, each image adding a different aspect to the overall image.

### 3.2.8. Dialogue interjected by YHWH (Ps 32:9)

אל־תְּהִינָּה כְּסוּסִים כְּפָרָדִים אִין הֶבְיִן בְּמַתְגָּה וְרָסָן עֲדִינוּ לְבָלוּם בְּלִ קְרָב אֱלֹהִים:

E2a [9] Do not be like a horse or like a mule, without understanding;

E2b that needs his tackle—bridle and rein—for restraint

E2c or he would not come near you.

As revealed earlier in the study and in Table 1.5, verse 8 and verse 9 correlates closely. A horse and a mule each were an integral part at the start of a journey, and the subsequent audiences are warned that although they are part of the journey, they are not the ones to carry the weight or to pull the carriage. YHWH then proceeds to point to the aspects that a horse and a mule have that they should not have, namely 'no understanding'. Even this image receives an explanation by yet another motif, a

'bridle and rein'. The image of YHWH guiding subsequent audiences where to go with his 'eye', stands in direct opposition to the 'bridle and rein' a horse and a mule need.

### 3.2.9. Final warning and call to worship (Ps 32:10)

רבים מכאובים לרשע והבוטח ביהוה חסד סובבנו:

F1a [10] Many are the pains of the wicked,

F1b but for the one who trusts YHWH loyal love surrounds him.

Psalm 32 is concluded by three final motifs. Verse 10 paints two themes in the minds of subsequent audiences. The first is of the 'many pains of the wicked' and the second motif is of 'loyal love' that 'surrounds him'.

The first motif is of 'many pains'. The theme correlates with a flood, as a flood is excess water to the point of destruction. The type of sorrow that the psalmist paints for subsequent audiences are a 'self-inflicted' sorrow that, when too much, can be harmful, like a flood. The 'sorrow' is of the 'wicked'. The subsequent audiences understood the 'wicked' (רשע) as someone is 'morally wrong'. This motif is of someone that is a 'bad person' according to society, and not necessarily according to YHWH. It is a label added to someone by the community at large, not YHWH per se.

The second motif serves as an antithesis of the first. The second person is someone who trusts in YHWH. As subsequent audiences were responsible for either building or finding useful shelters, verse 7 created the motif of a 'hiding place'. Whenever 'trust' is used, the feeling of safety is associated with it, the belief that one can trust a structure to keep one safe. As the motif in verse 7 revealed YHWH as the hiding place (one that can be trusted), the subsequent audiences are encouraged in this motif to believe as much in YHWH as YHWH is trustworthy. As noted earlier in the study, the promise to this person that trusts in YHWH are 'loyal love' will surround him. The motif here builds on the theme of a flood that surrounds everything on land. The subsequent audiences would imagine how there are flooded, but instead of water, with 'loyal love'. This is then considered space where the splendour of forgiveness will take a person. The subsequent audiences can stand in a place where they are flooded with 'loyal love', 'trusting YHWH' as much as YHWH is trustworthy.

### 3.2.10. Final warning and call to worship (Ps 32:11)

שִׂמְחוּ בַיהוָה וְגִילוּ צְדִיקִים וְהַרְזִינוּ כָּל-יִשְׂרָאֵל לֵב:

F2a [11] Be glad in YHWH and rejoice, you righteous,  
F2b and shout for joy, all you upright of heart.

The final motif demonstrates the forgiveness-progress the subsequent audiences can achieve if they enjoy the splendour of forgiveness. The last theme is of people that are 'righteous' and 'upright of heart' that should 'be glad in YHWH and rejoice' and 'shout for joy'.

The subsequent audiences see in this final motif, a motif, not of how 'righteous' and 'upright' they should be, but who they already are if they followed the previous themes explaining the splendour of forgiveness. This final motif is not only the result of the splendour of forgiveness but is part of the process that the first audience saw through the diverse themes described in this 'Maskil'. The process is incomplete without this final motif. 'To be glad' can also be translated with 'to have joy'. Here the righteous is painted as having joy, continually. This joy should lead to 'rejoicing' (dancing), specifically 'in YHWH', as the source of this splendour of forgiveness. They should also 'shout'. For subsequent audiences, this paints the picture of a messenger proclaiming news from the king. Now the subsequent audiences can see themselves as someone standing as the 'messenger' of YHWH, proclaiming the splendour of forgiveness.

### 3.3. Tradition history

Psalms 32 had a special place in history. For instance, Solopova (2013:92) noted that some of the surviving manuscripts emphasize that the Psalms were important in the monastic tradition, rather than in the secular, liturgical cycle. Liturg. 311, for example, is a Carthusian *Psalter*, made in Italy, probably Venice, in the third quarter of the fifteenth century. It has decorated initials at Psalms 20(21), 32(33), 45(46), 59(60), 73(74), 85(86), 101(102), 109(110), and 144(145):10. These psalms were recited first at Matins on Sunday and during the week, and at Vespers on Sunday and Saturday in the monastic use.' Solopova (2013:92-93) also noted that Psalm 32 featured in Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Gough Liturg. 2. It was written in the late twelfth or early thirteenth century England, particularly the north of England. Psalm 32 was recited first at Matins during the week in the monastic use. Rosen (2013:105-119) wrote an

article on how stained glass was used in the past to reflect the message of a psalm in a simplistic way. Psalm 32 was not mentioned, the purpose of Psalm 32, as shown in this study, would make for exciting art as well.

Psalm 32 could have been sung, as verse 11 is a call to sing. Mitchell (2013:119-133) notes in his paper ‘the work of Suzanne Haïk-Vantoura, who proposed not only that the Masoretic cantillation marks (or te‘amim) preserve the Temple song, but that she had decoded the te‘amim.’ To find the melody of Psalm 32 using Masoretic cantillation, would add a different element as to how to understand the historical use of Psalm 32.

Traditions in interpreting the psalms changed in recent years. John F.A. Sawyer (2013:134-136) notes that the fascination with the historical-critical method led to some overly aggressive stances regarding the *Psalter*. Sawyer blames this on the Protestant overcorrection to only trust the Hebrew text to grasp the original version. In this pursuit, studies disregarded a lot of late additions to the text that were seen as inferior. About Psalm 32, a heading like ‘to/for/by David, a ‘Maskil’ would not have found its way into an English Bible translation.

### **3.4. Redactional history**

#### **3.4.1. Psalm 32**

The redactional history of Psalm 32 is summarised by Briggs & Briggs (1969:276) as follows: ‘The Psalm (32) was originally part of two pentameter pentastichs, vv. 1-6. In this form, it belongs to the Persian period. It was enlarged by a series of additions: first v 7, then a tetrameter tetrastich of advice v 8-9, and a liturgical trimester tetrastich of a general character v10.’ Briggs & Briggs (1969:280) further argues that ‘editors made additions to the psalm for various reasons.’ Briggs & Briggs (1969:280) uses the rest of the Psalms to explain where the editor got verses 6-11 from. For instance, Briggs & Briggs (1969:280) explains the return to the first person in verse 7. He argues that the idea of ‘hiding place’ was not a general idea of Psalm 32, but rather a specific thought with reference to the flood in the previous line. Briggs & Briggs (1969:280-281) also argues that the phrase: ‘you are my hiding place’, ‘probably come into the psalm from Psalm 31:21.

Briggs & Briggs (1969:281) explains that verse 8 (‘I will instruct you and teach you’) is in ‘accordance with the legal attitude of mind after Nehemiah – ‘in the way you

should go', the way of the Law, the legal way or course of life and conduct'. The psalm should be studied from the perspective that the psalmist was a skilful craftsman. This approach, looking for conveyed meaning in Psalm 32 in its current form, brings the psalm to life, and highlights metaphors and links otherwise missed. It is for this reason that the approach of Briggs & Briggs (1969:279-280) does not live up to the full potential of Psalm 32.

#### **3.4.2. Psalm 25-34**

Gillingham (2018:163) summarises this section of the psalms as: 'Prayers and Thanks for Deliverance'. Gillingham (2018:163) argues that the ten psalms form a chiasmic structure, and shows the similarities between Psalm 25 and 34. Both psalms are 'acrostics, each lacks the letter waw inexplicably, and each includes an extra letter at the end to make up the requisite 22 letters' (Gillingham, 2018:163).

Gillingham (2018:163) notes similarities between Psalm 25 and 34. Both are wisdom psalms; 'identify with the poor' (25:9, 34:2); refers to the 'fear of the Lord' (25:12,14 and 34:7,9,11); 'and both focus on 'trusting' (or 'taking refuge') in God (25:20 and 34:8)' (Gillingham, 2018:163). Gillingham (2018:163) further explains that Psalms 26–28 share a theme of the presence of God in his sanctuary (26:8; 27:4; 28:2). Rodd (2007:376) calls Psalm 29 'a majestic hymn of praise to YHWH, the God of thunderstorms.' Gillingham (2018:163) says that Psalm 29 'lies at the heart of this collection ... which praised God as Creator of the sun and giver of the law.'

Gillingham (2018:163) further notes that the position of Psalm 32 in this section is among Psalms 30–32 that all comprise thanksgiving psalms: although the sanctuary is no longer explicitly referred to, an attendant congregation is nevertheless presumed (30:4; 31:23; 32:11). Gillingham (2018:196) argues that although Psalm 32 is starkly different from Psalm 30 and 31, there are linguistic similarities. Themes that Gillingham (2018:196) find similar between Psalm 31 and 32 are 'trust' (31:6, 32:10), 'rejoicing' (31:7, 32:11), 'steadfast love' (31:21, 32:10), 'and I said/ I had said' (followed by a prayer) (31:22, 32:5).

#### **3.4.3. Book I - Psalm 1-41**

Bellinger (2013:147) said: 'I now think that reading the *Psalter* as a whole promise to add to the richly coloured tapestry of interpretative approaches available today. While



I would still hold to an eclectic approach, the task in this contribution is to explore particular dimensions of it, including the shift from *Gattung* and *Sitz im Leben* (form and life-setting) to *Sitz im Buch* or *Sitz in der Literatur* (settings in literature) as well as theological issues raised by the *Psalter* as a whole.'

Bellinger (2013:157-158) summarizes his article: 'The *Psalter* as Theodicy writ large' that the *Psalter* is multidimensional, and a multifaceted piece of literature. He argues that the exile had a significant influence on the psalms, especially from Psalm 90 (Book IV and V)(2013:148). Book I to III describes the rise and fall of the Davidic monarchy. Pertaining to issues of theodicy, the psalmist(s) of Psalm 32 stays clear of this issue by stating the dire situation as a natural cause of events, and in the mould of Bellinger (2013:147-160), Psalm 32 then doesn't fit into the primary purpose of the *Psalter*. Human (2013:161-168) in his article: 'The *Psalter* and Theodicy: Perspectives Related to a Rhetorical Approach', however, disagrees that the *Psalter's* purpose can be summarised as: 'theodicy'. He argues this due to the fact the *Psalter* ends with hymnody in Book V, more than with lament. Psalm 32, although containing elements of lament, ends with hymnody as well, thus fitting in the *Psalter*.

Seybold (2013:168-182) proposes a way that each psalm made it into the *Psalter*. He argues in favour of a Hebrew *Urtext* of the psalms and contends that a Hebrew Book I of the *Psalter* (Pss 3 to 41 and 51 to 72) was kept in the temple and functioned as the normative edition. David Howard responded to Seybold (2013:182-189) in an article entitled: 'Jewish and Christian Approaches to the Psalms: Conflict and Convergence', arguing that, although Seybold follows a diachronic approach and much of the American scholars follow a synchronic approach, both methods are valuable.

Weiser (1972:285) argues that the Psalms 3-41 represent another earlier collection. According to Weiser (1972:285), Book I of the Psalms was supposed to be a homogeneous Davidic *Psalter*. He contends that there are no rules followed in the assembly or arrangement of the psalms in Book I. I agree with Weiser (1972:285) that Book I is an earlier group of psalms from the first temple's tradition.

## CHAPTER 4 – THEOLOGY: SPLENDOUR OF FORGIVENESS

### 4.1. Introduction

The third objective is to outline the theology of Psalm 32. This objective will display the splendour of forgiveness in Psalm 32 and address some of the theological topics connected with Psalm 32.

### 4.2. Splendour of forgiveness

In this chapter, the study showcases the splendour of forgiveness using tradition-historical links and the text of Psalm 32. These tradition-historical links are found by using the information obtained in the second study method. The motifs built in the synchronic analysis will be listed as a heading and discussed. The discussion looks at the first historical link mentioned in the psalms, Wisdom literature and the Pentateuch. According to Brown (2014:3), the five parts of the psalms corresponds with the first five books of Moses. Thus, as Psalm 32 is in the first part of the *Psalter*, it corresponds with Genesis and historical links found in Genesis should be enough in this thesis. The aim is to find whether each picture of the splendour of forgiveness in the psalm conforms or disagree with the other images in Psalm 32 to determine whether there is a unified theology of the splendour of forgiveness in Psalm 32. To understand the full nuance of each motif throughout each passage is outside the scope of this study and is not portrayed here.

#### 4.2.1. Forgiveness and guilt

- Forgiveness, not humankind's effort (Ps 32:5), lifts the guilt of my sin (Ps 32:1).

The guilt of sin on the conscience of humankind is not easily lifted and attempts to lift this burden are evident in the lives of ordinary people. The thesis of this motif is that only forgiveness can lift the burden of guilt, and efforts of humankind fall short of lifting this guilt.

Psalm 32:5 and Psalm 32:1 provides evidence to this effect:

C1a [5] I made known my sin to you,  
C1b and my iniquity I did not cover.

C2a I said, 'I will confess concerning my transgressions to YHWH,'  
 C2b but you took away the guilt of my sin. Selah

A1a [1] Happy is he whose transgression is taken away,  
 A1b whose sin is covered.

The psalmist did four actions in verse 5, followed by the verb 'forgave' that also can mean 'to lift'. Thus, the inferred meaning is that YHWH lifts (in other words, 'forgave') one thing (not four) - the guilt of my sin (the reason the psalmist did all the actions).

I gave details in Table 1.3 on verse 5: אֲדַעֵךְ (I acknowledge), לֹא־כִפֵּיתִי (I did not hide), אָמַרְתִּי (I said) and אֶדְבֹּר (I will confess). These four verbs are compared to the one action YHWH did: נָשָׂאתָ (you forgave). This shows that the efforts of humankind, how noble it might seem, is followed by 'but you' (YHWH) (וְאַתָּה). The reason that the waw is translated with 'but' and not 'and', stems from the fact that the waw is a waw-copulative that joins two related terms by contrasting them ('but') (Van der Merwer *et al.* (1999:298-300).

'You forgave' (נָשָׂאתָ) was also used in verse 1, where YHWH once again 'lifts up' one thing: transgression (פְּשָׁעֵךְ).

לְדָוִד מִשְׁכֵּל אֲשֶׁר־נָשָׂא פְּשָׁע כִּסּוּי חַטָּאָה

Of David. A Maskil. [A1a] Happy is he whose transgression is taken away,  
 [A1b] whose sin is covered.

נָשָׂא that means forgiven is a common word in the Hebrew Bible and continually refers to an upward movement, like 'lifted up', or 'take up'. The motif that comes to mind is that of a heavy burden that is removed from someone. Sin is the weight that weighs people down. Forgiveness thus 'lifts up' (נָשָׂא) that weight.

One might argue that the symbolic meaning of 'forgave' (נָשָׂא), namely 'to lift up' never refers to something being lifted. How would the readers know to associate YHWH that 'forgave' 'the guilt of my sin' with YHWH that 'lifts up' 'the guilt of my sin', like a burden

that is lifted? In Psalm 4:3, the psalmist encourages YHWH 'to lift up the light of His face'. People were able to ask YHWH 'to lift' up, but it is often used in a literal sense.

In Job 2:12, Job's three friends 'lifted' their eyes, and in Genesis 4:13 Cain said that his punishment is more significant than he can bear ('lift', 'forgive'). Thus, in the Pentateuch and Wisdom literature, the association was made between 'lift' and 'forgive'.

Texts in the historical books and Pentateuch show that actions of humankind are futile and that only forgiveness can get rid of the burden of the guilt of sin.

In Exodus 2:11-22, Moses saw a fellow Hebrew being beaten by an Egyptian. He kills the Egyptian. The next, when Moses intervenes when two Hebrew fight, they ask Moses whether he will kill them as well. Because of his guilt, he flees into the desert. Later on, God still uses Moses to lead the nation out of Egypt. Thus, God forgave Moses, although Moses fled.

In 2 Samuel 11, David took Uriah's wife, Bathsheba, and let Uriah get killed. Nathan went to David following this event and gave him a word of the Lord that the sword will never leave his house as punishment for his deeds. 'Then David said to Nathan, 'I have sinned against the Lord.' Nathan replied, 'The Lord has taken away your sin. You are not going to die.' Like in Psalm 32, forgiveness was not earned but followed a simple confession. David did not need to do something to earn his forgiveness.

Kirkpatrick (1921:162) gives three meanings for forgiveness: 'taking a burden away', 'as a covering (so that the foulness of sin no longer meets the eye of the judge and calls for punishment)', 'as cancelling of a debt (which is no longer reckoned against the offender).' Bullock (2018:143) rightly enhances this view point by arguing that it is divine forgiveness, and not humankind's attempts to rid guilt, that lifts the burden of the guilt of sin.

#### **4.2.2. Spreading forgiveness**

- People symbolically shoot an arrow and hits the target (Ps 32:5c), which spreads the splendour of forgiveness (Ps 32:11b).

People symbolically shoot an arrow (lives their lives) and hits the target (confess their sins) (Ps 32:5c), which spreads the splendour of forgiveness (Ps 32:11b).

This metaphor is built on the double meaning ‘sin’ has in Biblical Hebrew: In Psalm 32, חַטָּאָה is used with regards to ‘sin’. The term can be translated as ‘an offence’, or ‘a sacrifice for an offence’. חַטָּאָה is the feminine of חָטָא which means a ‘crime’ or its penalty. חָטָא has חָטָא as its root. חָטָא means ‘to miss a target,’ and figuratively means ‘to sin’ (Strong, 1890). As a bow and an arrow were used as a weapon to hunt for food, the commonality in the first community turned the arrow into a metaphor explaining ‘sin’. It is unfathomable to argue that humankind can live without sinning. Thus, in this metaphor, similarly, humankind will then never hit the ‘target’ of not sinning. So, the target cannot be never to sin, but rather to confess sins. And by confessing, humankind is a straight arrow that hits its target. Psalm 32:5c showcases how the psalmist ‘hits its target’ by confessing ‘concerning my transgressions to YHWH’. This act is followed by a call to prayer and example of prayer (Ps 32:6a-7i), a dialogue interjected by YHWH (Ps 32:8-9) and a final warning and call to worship (Ps 32:10a-11f). The psalmist confessed (and ‘hit the target’), and the final part of this act is a ‘call to worship’.

The motif that people symbolically shoot an arrow and hits the target, which spreads the splendour of forgiveness is shown by verse 11:

שְׂמְחוּ בַיהוָה וְגִילוּ צְדִיקִים וְהַרְנִינוּ כָּל-יִשְׂרָאֵל לֵב:

F2a [11] Be glad in YHWH and rejoice, you righteous,  
 F2b and shout for joy, all you upright of heart.

Verse 11 is the product of verse 5c:

C2a [5c] I said, ‘I will confess concerning my transgressions to YHWH,’

אָמַרְתִּי אֹדָה עָלַי פְּשָׁעֵי לִיהוָה

אֹדָה is translated as ‘I will (let myself) confess’. Strong (1890) demonstrates that ‘I will confess’ (אֹדָה) means to use or hold out the hand and throw a stone or an arrow at or away from someone or something. ‘I will confess’ (אֹדָה) refers to an arrow as well, ‘to throw an arrow at something’. If confess is considered the opposite of ‘sin’,

then 'I will confess' (אִוְדָה) means 'to throw an arrow at something, and to not אָטָף ('to miss a target', in other words, to hit.

This metaphor's aim is to convey two meanings: Firstly, the notion that humankind is missing their target every day is only valid if the aim is not to sin. From the text of Psalm 32 along with etymological arguments, there is evidence that humankind can 'hit' the target and fulfil their purpose by 'confessing' (Ps 32:5). Secondly, this metaphor's aim is to convey a meaning that the confession in Psalm 32:5 leads to Psalm 32:11 that calls other people to worship. This then shares the splendour of forgiveness.

Numbers 5:7 says: 'they will confess their sin that they did and will make restitution for their guilt by adding a fifth [to it] and giving it [to whoever was wronged].'<sup>155</sup> Like Psalm 32, confession happens first, followed by the splendour of forgiveness. In this context, it is 'by adding a fifth [to it]', and in Psalm 32, it is a call to worship.

Nehemiah 9:2-3<sup>155</sup> describe how confession is followed by worship, inviting more people into the splendour of forgiveness.

#### 4.2.3. Forgiveness and humankind's relationship with YHWH

- Forgiveness restores humankind's relationship with YHWH (Ps 32:2b, 9a), meaning: it creates breathing space (Ps 32:5) and call people righteous and upright (Ps 32:11).

Forgiveness restores humankind's relationship with YHWH, Psalm 32:2b: 'and in whose spirit there is no deceit' (וְאֵין בְּרוּחֹתָי רְמִיָּה:). A relationship between humankind and YHWH and humankind with each other can only function properly when both parties to the relationship have 'no deceit' 'in their spirit' about who the other person is. In Psalm 32, there is a similarity between verses 2 and 9. 'Without' (אֵין) forms a significant rhyme in verse 2 and is utilised as a poetic device to link the meaning of

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<sup>155</sup> Neh 9:2-3 - Those of the seed of Israel separated themselves from all of the foreigners and stood and confessed their sins and the iniquities of their ancestors. <sup>3</sup> They stood up in their place and read from the book of the law of Yahweh their God for a fourth part of the day, and for a fourth they were confessing and worshiping Yahweh their God.

verse 2 and 9. ‘Without’ (אֵין)<sup>156</sup> appears twice in Psalm 32. In Psalm 32:2, it refers to the absence of ‘deceit’ (רַמְיָה) in ‘spirit’ (רוּחַ), and Psalm 32:9 relates to the lack of ‘understanding’ (בִּינָה) in the ‘horse’ (סוּס) or ‘mule’ (פָּרָד). The psalmist is pitting ‘deceit’ (רַמְיָה) and ‘understanding’ (בִּינָה) as opposites. ‘Deceit’ (רַמְיָה) is something unwanted, while ‘understanding’ (בִּינָה) is something sought after in that culture. The psalmist knew that the readers would want to avoid ‘deceit’ (רַמְיָה) and strives to acquire ‘understanding’ (בִּינָה).<sup>157</sup> Wisdom literature uses knowledge, understanding and seeking wisdom as synonyms, for example, in Proverbs 2:4-5:

[4] and if you look for it [wisdom] as for silver  
 and search for it [wisdom] as for hidden treasure,  
 [5] then you will understand the fear of the Lord  
 and find the knowledge of God.

Now the question remains, knowledge, understanding and seeking wisdom about what? This thesis argues that ‘to be blessed’ is to know YHWH, and thus, to be ‘without’ (אֵין) ‘deceit’<sup>158</sup> (רַמְיָה) is to have ‘understanding’ (בִּינָה) about YHWH. Once humankind has ‘understanding’ about YHWH, their relationship is restored.

This restored relationship between humankind and YHWH creates ‘breathing space’ as shown in Psalm 32:5:

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<sup>156</sup> אֵין can be defined as a particle of negation, and can be translated as “is not”, “are not”, “was not” or “were not”.

<sup>157</sup> As expected, appears בִּינָה eighty times in wisdom literature, twenty-six times in the Psalms, but thirty times in Proverbs.

<sup>158</sup> ‘Deceit’ (רַמְיָה), however, is not a word frequently found in the Old Testament. It is utilised the first time by Job, when he addresses his friends, asking them rather to keep quiet, as remaining silent will be counted towards them as wisdom (Job 13:5). And as they speak, they are letting God hear ‘deceit’ (רַמְיָה). Once again, one of the words of Psalm 32 appears in wisdom literature, which strengthens the argument that Psalm 32 contains a wisdom element. In another study by Botha (2014:1-9), Psalm 32 is compared to Proverbs 28 to show that “it was devised from the beginning as a wisdom-teaching psalm although it simulates the form of a psalm of thanksgiving in certain respects.” ‘Deceit’ (רַמְיָה), appears twice in Job, once in every book of the psalms, twice in book five, and four times in Proverbs. The other three times ‘deceit’ (רַמְיָה) is found in the Hebrew Bible is once in Jeremiah, Hosea and Micah, increasing the total use of ‘deceit’ (רַמְיָה) to fifteen (Strong’s, 1890).

C1a [5] I made known my sin to you,

C1b and my iniquity I did not cover.

C2a I said, 'I will confess concerning my transgressions to YHWH,'

C2b but you took away the guilt of my sin. Selah

The psalmist, in Psalm 32:5, realises that he/she can 'make sins known', 'not cover' 'iniquities' and 'say: I will confess' 'to YHWH'. The psalmist in Psalm 32:2b realised he/she should be without deceit, and to understand YHWH. It is because of this 'understanding' of who YHWH is, that he/she can now has the 'breathing space' to act.

The last thing that the psalmist now does is to call people 'righteous' and 'upright': Verse 11b:

שִׂמְחוּ בַיהוָה וְגִילוּ צְדִיקִים וְתִרְנְנוּ כָּל־יִשְׂרָאֵל לֵב:

F2a [11] Be glad in YHWH and rejoice, you righteous,

F2b and shout for joy, all you upright of heart.

The psalmist felt the feeling of 'righteous' and 'upright of heart' because of forgiveness and starts to call other people that. Jeremiah 31:33-34 confirms that relationship between YHWH and humankind when he said that he would put his 'law in their inward parts of their hearts I will write it, and I will be to them God, and they themselves will be to me people.'<sup>159</sup>

To summarise, forgiveness restores humankind's relationship with YHWH (Ps 32:2b, 9a) by removing 'deceit' (a wrong idea about YHWH), and replacing it with 'understanding' (a right idea about YHWH). This leads to breathing space (Ps 32:5), where one can express oneself to YHWH. Once forgiven, one can call people righteous and upright (Ps 32:11).

#### 4.2.4. Forgiveness and iniquity

- Forgiveness deals with the prism of iniquity (Ps 32:2, 5b) and the wicked (Ps 32:10a).

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<sup>159</sup> Jer 33:31-34: <sup>33</sup>“But this *is* the covenant that I will [make] with the house of Israel after those days,” [declares] Yahweh: “I will put my law in their inward parts and on their hearts I will write it, and I will be to them God, and they themselves will be to me people. <sup>34</sup>And they will no longer teach each one his neighbor, or each one his brother, [saying], ‘Know Yahweh,’ for all of them will know me, from their [smallest] and up to their [greatest],” [declares] Yahweh, “for I will forgive their iniquity and their sin I will no longer remember.”



אֲשֶׁר־י אָדָם לֹא יִחַשֵׁב יְהוָה לוֹ עֲוֹן וְאִין בְּרוּחוֹ רַמְיָה:

A2a [2] Happy is a person to whom YHWH does not impute iniquity  
A2b and in whose spirit there is no deceit.

וְעֲוֹנִי לֹא-כִסִּיתִי

[5] and my iniquity I did not cover.

רַבִּים מִכְּאוֹבִים לְרָשָׁע

F1a [10] Many are the pains of the wicked,

The thesis of this passage is that forgiveness deals with the prism of iniquity in Psalm 32:2 and 5b, and with the wicked and the sinner in Ps 32:10a.

The use of iniquity in Psalm 32 highlights that iniquity includes a multitude of sinful actions. Utilizing ‘iniquity’ (עֲוֹן) in verse 2, the psalmist uses the singular form of the verb. There are three reasons for the singular form instead of the plural form of ‘iniquity’ (עֲוֹנוֹת): all of humankind’s actions are categorized as ‘iniquity’ (עֲוֹן) referring to humankind's sinful state; the psalmist had a specific iniquity in mind that he/she needs forgiveness for; or the psalmist meant ‘iniquities’ (plural) but as a poet made ‘iniquity’ to agree with ‘humankind’ (אָדָם) in number. These three options are not mutually exclusive and can all be true. The first audience and subsequent audiences were thus left with an exciting picture in their minds, much like a prism, placing the understanding of ‘iniquity’ just beyond their reach. The psalmist thus avoids placing the burden of guilt on the audience, and instead focuses their attention on the splendour of forgiveness that will deal with this ‘prism of iniquity’.

The meaning of the ‘prism of iniquity’ is elaborated in verse 5 (‘and my iniquity, וְעֲוֹנִי). The psalmist used the first person singular personal suffix in עֲוֹנִי (‘iniquity’) that personalise ‘his iniquity’. The early readers and primary audience of this psalm immediately relate to this passage, asking themselves and testing their moral stance and circumstance, on whether they have or experienced ‘iniquity’ (עֲוֹן). What is helpful about Psalm 32, is the psalmist’s commitment not to condemn himself, but to acknowledge, not hide, but to say and confess his iniquity and sin, that YHWH can forgive his sin and iniquity. In his way, he guides the first readers and audience where they can receive care and comfort, and not condemnation.

Whereas חַטָּאת (sin) appeared mostly in Deuteronomy and Numbers, revealing a Priestly source, עֲוֹן<sup>160</sup> occurs mainly in Leviticus, making it a Yahwist source.

The prism of iniquity is what defines the wicked and the sinner. The thesis makes a distinction between the wicked and the sinner. In Psalm 32, ‘wicked’ appears and ‘sinner’ not:

רְבִים מְכַאוֹבַיִם לְרָשָׁע

F1a [10] Many are the pains of the wicked,

The phrase ‘many pains’ correlates with a flood (Ps 32:6c)<sup>161</sup>, as a flood is excess water to the point of destruction. The type of sorrow that the psalmist describes is a ‘self-inflicted’ sorrow that, when in excess, can be harmful, like excess of water (flood). The ‘sorrow’ is of the ‘wicked’. The psalmist once included himself in the term ‘wicked’, but now as understanding the splendour of forgiveness took away the prism of forgiveness, is ‘surrounded by loyal love’ (Ps 32:10b)

Job had to deal with the prism of iniquity and couldn’t understand why he couldn’t experience the splendour of forgiveness (Job 7:21)<sup>162</sup>. Cain said his ‘iniquity’ is too much to bear (Gen 4:13)<sup>163</sup>, and it becomes evident that the splendour of forgiveness could eradicate the prism of iniquity in his life.

#### 4.2.5. The nature of man and the invitation

- Forgiveness addresses the nature of man (Ps 32:2a), invites the ‘faithful ones’ to pray (Ps 32:6a) and the ‘righteous’ to rejoice (Ps 32:11).

Forgiveness addresses the nature of man (Ps 32:2a), and then forgiveness invites the ‘faithful ones’ to pray (Ps 32:6a) and the ‘righteous’ to rejoice (Ps 32:11).

The significance that using the phrase ‘humankind’ (אָדָם) yields in the Psalms needs to be discussed. אָדָם in Psalm 32:2 adds to the understanding of ‘humankind’.

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<sup>160</sup> עֲוֹן occurs two-hundred and thirty times in the Hebrew Bible, forty-six times in the wisdom literature and twenty-nine times in the Psalms.

<sup>161</sup> וְרַק לְשֹׁטֶף מֵיִם רַבִּים אֲלֵיוֹ לֹא יָגִיעוּ: - D1c Surely at the flood of many waters they will not reach him.

<sup>162</sup> Job 7:21 “And why do you not pardon my transgression and take away my guilt? For now I shall lie in the dust, and you will seek me, but I will be no more.”

<sup>163</sup> Gen 4:13 “And Cain said to Yahweh, “My punishment *is* greater than *I can* bear.””

It demonstrates that ‘humankind’ (אָדָם) itself does not bear much meaning on its own and that the context in which אָדָם is used, addresses the image of ‘humankind’ three categories. The different settings of אָדָם also reflect the struggle of the first community to define the image of humankind. Is ‘humankind’ morally ‘good’, ‘bad’ or ‘neutral’? However ‘humankind’ is seen in the Hebrew Bible, in the context of Psalm 32, ‘humankind’ אָדָם is seen as ‘neutral’.

Negatively, Psalm 32 shows that humankind can have iniquities (v. 5b), be like a horse or a mule (v. 9), have pains and be wicked (v. 10a). Positively, Psalm 32 shows that humankind can be blessed/happy (vv. 1 and 2), faithful (v. 6a), trusting of YHWH (v. 10 a), righteous (v. 11a) and upright in heart (v. 11b).

The differentiator between seeing ‘humankind’ as morally ‘good’ or ‘bad’ in Psalm 32, is the splendour of forgiveness. Without the splendour of forgiveness ‘humankind’ has permanent iniquities (v. 5b), are like a horse or a mule (v. 9), have pains and be wicked (v. 10a). With the splendour of forgiveness, ‘humankind’ is blessed/happy (vv. 1 and 2), faithful (v. 6a), trusting of YHWH (10 a) righteous (v. 11a) and upright in heart (v. 11b).

Thus, confessing iniquities and receiving the splendour of forgiveness from YHWH may change the moral nature of ‘humankind’ from morally corrupt to good.

Forgiveness invites the ‘faithful to pray’ (v. 6a), the ‘righteous to be glad and rejoice’ (v. 11a) and the ‘upright in heart to shout for joy (v. 11b).

עַל-זֹאת יִתְפַּלֵּל כָּל-חֹסֵד אֱלֹהִים

D1a [6] Therefore let all the faithful pray to you

The motif of prayer starts with someone bowing their heads, using the word יִתְפַּלֵּל. It is כָּל-חֹסֵד (all the faithful) that should bow their heads. The same person(s) (upright in heart, like ‘the faithful ones’) that is/are asked to bow their heads in verse 6 is/are invited to ‘rejoice’, ‘be glad’ and shout for joy in verse 11.

There is no command to start praying, instead of an invitation to pray when one feels the urge to pray. Lawrence (1996:286) argues that ‘prayer becomes a way of life for those who know that their accomplishments, capabilities and intension are always inadequate.’ This inadequacy that Lawrence (1996:286) mentions aligns with the invitation to pray: ‘Therefore, ‘let’ all the faithful pray to you.’

שִׂמְחוּ בַיהוָה וְגִילוּ צְדִיקִים וְהַרְגִינוּ כָּל־יִשְׂרָאֵל לַב:

F2a [11] Be glad in YHWH and rejoice, you righteous,  
F2b and shout for joy, all you upright of heart.

שִׂמְחוּ<sup>164</sup> is translated as ‘Be glad.’ Verse 11 ends in the same way that verse 6 started, and it completes this ‘call to praise’. In verse 6, the author wrote: ‘pray’ (יְתַפְּלֵל) ‘all the faithful/godly’ (כָּל־הַקְּטִיד) ‘unto you’ (אֵלַיךְ). More than a third of the times שִׂמְחוּ<sup>165</sup> appears in the psalms. Using this word<sup>166</sup> by the psalmist calls the primary audience to be glad in the wake of what was just said. Due to the testimony of the psalmist, he now believes that what he said was enough to convince the audience that they are now ‘righteous’ and ‘upright in heart’ because of the splendour of forgiveness they received. If they believe (as the psalmist suggests they should), they are now called to be glad. Note the author used the imperative Qal form here, commanding them to be glad. Note the author does not call the audience now to repent, or to bring a sacrifice, rather rejoice.

In Psalm 8:4-6<sup>167</sup>, אֲדָמָה is utilised for the first time, while the significance correlates closely with that of Genesis 1:26-27<sup>168</sup>. As the mention of אֲדָמָה in Genesis 1:26-27 sets the tone for the understanding of אֲדָמָה in the Hebrew Bible, אֲדָמָה in Psalm 8:4-6 sets the tone for its insight in the *Psalter*. In both these texts, one sees the optimism that the image of ‘humankind’ is morally ‘good’. In Genesis 1:26-27, ‘humankind’ is made in the image of YHWH. In Psalm 8:4-6, ‘humankind’ is ‘crowned with majesty’ a little lower than ‘heavenly beings’. The splendour of forgiveness restores this image to humankind, like the psalmist in Psalm 32 calls ‘humankind’ once again ‘righteous’ and ‘faithful’, but only after receiving the splendour of forgiveness.

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<sup>164</sup> שִׂמְחוּ is a verb Qal imperative second person masculine plural.

<sup>165</sup> “To be glad” (שִׂמְחוּ) appears one-hundred and fifty-five times in the Hebrew Bible and fifty-two times in the Psalms.

<sup>166</sup> . It means “to brighten up”, “to cheer up”, “to have joy” or “to make merry or rejoice.”

<sup>167</sup> Ps 8:4-6 What is a human being that you think of him? And a child of humankind that you care for him? 5 And you made him a little lower than heavenly beings, and with glory and with majesty you crowned him. 6 You make him over the works of your hands; all things you have placed under his feet.

<sup>168</sup> 26 And God said, “Let us make humankind in our image and according to our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of heaven, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every moving thing that moves upon the earth.” 27 So God created humankind in his image, in the likeness of God he created him, male and female he created them.

#### 4.2.6. The image humankind has of YHWH

- Forgiveness corrects the image humankind has of YHWH (Ps 32:2a) that restores trust in YHWH to see him as a hiding place (Ps 32:7a).

אֲשֶׁרִי אָדָם לֹא יַחְשֹׁב יְהוָה לּוֹ עֲוֹן

A2a [2a] Happy is a person to whom YHWH does not impute iniquity

אַתָּה סִתְּרָ לִי מִצָּר

D2a [7a] You are my hiding place from trouble.

Verses 1 and 2 of Psalm 32 starts with ‘happy’ or ‘blessed’ (אֲשֶׁרִי). ‘Blessed’ (אֲשֶׁרִי) draws attention to what follows in verse 1, namely to those whose transgression is taken away, and in verse 2, namely to those whom YHWH does not impute iniquity. In verses 1 and 2, the psalmist describes the humankind as ‘blessed’ or ‘happy’. The reason for ‘blessed’ or ‘happy’ highlights how forgiveness in verse 1, fixes the image of ‘humankind’ and in verse 2, provides the correct image of YHWH to humankind. After the splendour of forgiveness fixes humankind’s image, and after humankind has the correct image of YHWH, humankind can enter a relationship with YHWH. According to this thesis, Psalm 32:1-2 highlights how to start a relationship with YWH in general, and Psalm 32:3-11 explains the process for the psalmist to arrive at a relationship with YHWH.

In this thesis, the splendour of forgiveness corrects the image humankind has of YHWH (Ps 32:2a) that restores trust in YHWH to see him as a hiding place (Ps 32:7a).

Psalm 32:2 shows that YHWH does not impute iniquity (לֹא יַחְשֹׁב יְהוָה לּוֹ עֲוֹן). לֹא<sup>169</sup>, in this instance, shows that YHWH is prohibiting to impute sin. A translation might then reads: ‘Blessed [is] the man unto whom the LORD *would not allow* to impute

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<sup>169</sup> לֹא is defined as “not”. There are different clauses that לֹא is found in, for e.g. לֹא can be found in predications. According to Whitaker, et al. (1906). לֹא can either be utilized with a verb or with adjectives (or substantives). In this passage, לֹא is be found with a verb. These verbs are often infinitive tenses, whether imperfect or perfect. Like mentioned earlier, יַחְשֹׁב is in the Qal imperfect 3<sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular. Other places where לֹא appears is in short circumstantial clauses and with a final force. Whitaker, et al. (1906) notes that לֹא denotes prohibition when in conjunction with an imperfect verb.

iniquity, and in whose spirit [there is] no guilt'. 'Impute' (יִחְשֹׁב)<sup>170</sup>, translates as 'to plan in Jeremiah 29:11<sup>171</sup>, in which God plans for his people to prosper are exhibited in detail. The psalmist conveys a similar meaning of a morally sound YHWH with positive intentions planning a 'blessed' future for humankind in Psalm 32:2.

Psalm 32:2a summarised the principle of how the splendour of forgiveness corrects the image humankind has of YHWH. The psalmist showcases the effect of a corrected image of YHWH can have on humankind, namely that it creates trust in YHWH to see him as a hiding place (Ps 32:7a).

Verse 7a is translated as:

אַתָּה סִתְּרָ לִי מִצָּר

You are my hiding place from trouble.

The sentence starts with 'you (אַתָּה)', a pronoun. This emphasises 'you', referring to YHWH, and shows the trust the psalmist has in YHWH. It accentuates why verse 6 is a call for prayer and verse 7 an example of prayer. The psalmist continues to address YHWH directly. Later, in verse 10, he reverts to an impersonal tone. This personal tone adds a dynamic, which was not present until verse 5. The reader can now personalise the text in addressing YHWH while reading the text.

סִתְּרָ<sup>172</sup> is translated as 'hiding place.' The phrase refers mostly to the 'origin of man', that is the 'womb' or a 'place where YHWH keeps people safe' (Whitaker, et al., 1906). With this term, the poet explains that YHWH is his secret place and his/her origin.

Note that YHWH is not placing him in a hiding place spatially, but YHWH 'is' his hiding place. This links with verse 10 where he says: 'But he whom trusts' (וְהַבּוֹטֵחַ) 'in the Lord' (בְּיְהוָה) is surrounded by (the covenant of) love. Thus, the psalmist sees

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<sup>170</sup> There are only fifteen instances where יִחְשֹׁב is negative by לֹא: Gen 31:15; Lev 7:18; Num 23:9; 1 Kgs 10:21; 2 Kgs 12:16; 22:7; Ps 32:2; 35:20; Isa 10:7; 13:17; 29:17; 33:8; 53:3; Jer 11:19; 18:18.

<sup>171</sup> Jer 29:11: For I know the plans that I am planning concerning you,' declares YHWH, 'plans for prosperity and not for harm, to give to you a future and a hope.

<sup>172</sup> סִתְּרָ may be translated as "covering, protection or secrecy" according to (Whitaker *et al.*, 1906). סִתְּרָ is the stem and could mean "to be absent, keep close, conceal, hide or keep secret" according to Strong (1890).

YHWH as a space to be in and to be surrounded by Him. This might allude to the temple where one could experience the presence of YHWH. In this allusion the temple is not a place built by man, it is instead a state of mind, a consciousness. By using לִי<sup>173</sup>, once again, the poet makes it personal by stating that YHWH is ‘his’ hiding place.

Job dealt with the problem of not people around him not having the correct image of YHWH, and in Job 13:7, he reprimands his friends for having the wrong image of YHWH.<sup>174</sup>

#### 4.2.7. Without forgiveness – silence versus joy

- Without forgiveness, one is forced to keep silent (Ps 32:3a), but forgiveness demands gladness and joy (Ps 32:11)

The first part of the thesis of this passage is that without forgiveness, one is forced to keep silent (Ps 32:3a). The text of Psalm 32:3a reads:

כִּי־הִחַרְשֵׁתִי בְלֹו עֲצָמַי

B1a [3a] When I kept silent, my bones were worn out

The verb in the phrase in Psalm 32:3a, when I kept silent (הִחַרְשֵׁתִי), is in the Hif'il form. The Hif'il form conveys a causative meaning. Thus, the phrase in Psalm 32:3a reads: ‘When I was caused to kept silent, my bones were worn out.’

The psalmist used הִחַרְשֵׁתִי on purpose. חָרַשׁ embeds the meaning of ‘to plough’ and ‘peace’ alongside ‘silence’ (Strong, 1890). In Job 1:14, ‘to keep silent’ (חָרַשׁ) is translated as ‘tilling’. As a plough only functions when force is applied, similar, the reader not only kept silent but was ‘forced’ to keep silent.

The psalmist in verse 3, before receiving forgiveness in Psalm 32:5d, had to keep silent, and that wore his/her bones out. When עֲצָמַי<sup>175</sup> is used in the wisdom

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<sup>173</sup> לִי is translated by “for me”. לִי is a preposition ל + suffix pronoun, first person, singular.

<sup>174</sup> Job gave his fourth speech in after Zophar gave a speech in Job 11. In Job 13:7, Job addresses his critics’ view or ‘image’ of YHWH: “Will you speak falsely for God? And will you speak deceitfully for him?”

<sup>175</sup> עֲצָמַי is the plural feminine of עֲצָמָה with the first person singular suffix, and can be translated as “my bones”. עֲצָמָה is a common word used to translate “bone” or “skeleton”. In its plural form, it might also

literature, it refers either to one's entire body, of the deepest part of one's being, or one's 'core'. The forgiveness of sins helps the reader to deal with an internal feeling, and experience, rather than with an outside effect that sin might have caused. The remedy that the psalmist suggests for this problem is not to 'plough' (Hif'il of 'silent') 'silence', as discussed in the previous paragraphs. The psalmist advises the first community to confess their sins, and not to force silence upon themselves as a plough needs to be forced to stay in the ground.

After forgiveness is received in Psalm 32:5d, the psalmist demands gladness and joy in Psalm 32:11.

שִׂמְחוּ בַיהוָה וְגִילוּ צְדִיקִים

F2a [11a] Be glad in YHWH and rejoice, you righteous,

בַּיהוָה<sup>176</sup> is translated as 'in YHWH.' The preposition is a preposition of place.

The psalmist signals to the first audience that the symbolic place of their 'gladness', that is, the origin, should be 'in YHWH'. Although there are numerous reasons to rejoice and to be glad, the more significant reason is to rejoice in YHWH because of forgiveness. Throughout the psalm, the psalmist reveals how this one experience (receiving forgiveness) led him to experience various emotions that led him think about forgiveness, transgression, sin, iniquity, his spirit, guile, his bones, his roaring, day and night, moisture (life), summer, confession, prayer, YHWH, water, floods, hiding place, trouble, songs, instruction, guidance, YHWH's eye, horse, mule, bit and bridle, sorrows, the wicked, mercy and the Lord. After touching on all these topics, his closing argument is to be glad in the Lord 'and to rejoice' וְגִילוּ<sup>177</sup>. וְגִילוּ can also translate as 'spinning around'.

Forgiveness influenced the psalmist, and through his/her experience (vv. 3-11), the splendour of forgiveness leads the psalmist to demand gladness and rejoicing (v. 11a). Kraus (1992:69) suggests that the call to individually the 'righteous' to 'shout' is in line with the request to gather at Zion found in other places in the *Psalter*. This demonstrates Psalm 32 formed part of the cultic life. When the Psalms are studied in

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mean "limbs". It may also be translated as a metaphor for one's "body". appears in most of the books of the Hebrew Bible, and forty-five times in the wisdom literature.

<sup>176</sup> בַּיהוָה is a preposition and a noun proper masculine singular absolute.

<sup>177</sup> וְגִילוּ is a conjunction and a verb Qal imperative Masculine second person plural.



its entirety, Kraus (1992:155) concluded righteousness as the following: ‘That person is ‘righteous’ whose innocence has been demonstrated by YHWH’s verdict of not guilty, which refutes all accusations and shows they are baseless.’

Psalm 51 showcases a similar motif. Psalm 51:1 asks for forgiveness from God: ‘be gracious to me, O God, according to your loyal love. According to your abundant mercies, blot out my transgressions.’ Psalm 51:8 similarly to Psalm 32, then mentions ‘gladness’ and ‘rejoice’: ‘Make me hear joy and gladness; let the bones you have crushed rejoice.’

1 Samuel 2:9, like Psalm 32, shows that someone without forgiveness keeps silent: ‘He will keep the feet of his saints, and the wicked shall be silent in darkness; for by strength shall no man prevail (KJV).

#### 4.2.8. Without forgiveness – state of ‘innermost being’

- The absence of forgiveness hurts the ‘innermost being’ (Ps 32:3a) and is fatal, like a drought (Ps 32:4b).

כִּי־הִחַרְשֵׁתִי בְּלוּ עַצְמִי בְּשִׂאֲגוֹתַי כָּל־הַיּוֹם:

B1a [3] When I kept silent, my bones were worn out

The absence of a confession, and subsequently forgiveness, on the short term, hurt the one’s bones, symbolically his/her ‘innermost being’<sup>178</sup> (Ps 32:3a) and, on the long term, the absence of confession without forgiveness is fatal, like a drought (Ps 32:4b). The presence of the splendour of forgiveness in one’s life is, thus, according to Psalm 32, advantageous in the short term but essential in the long term.

נִהְפַךְ לְשִׁדְי בְּחַרְבְּנֵי קִיץ סֵלָה:

B2b [4b] My vigour was changed into the dry heat of summer. Selah.

The splendour of forgiveness is essential in one’s life in the long term, according to Psalm 32:4b. In Psalm 32:4b, the psalmist wrote how his/her ‘vigour

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<sup>178</sup> עַצְמִי refers to his innermost being, or spirit (Strong, 1890). Thus, the symbolic meaning one’s physical “bones”, rather a symbolic understanding of “bones”, an innermost being.

was changed into the dry heat of summer. Selah.’ בְּחַרְבָּנִי<sup>179</sup> is translated as ‘into the drought’.

נְהַפְדֵּד לְשֵׁדִי בְּחַרְבָּנִי קִיץ סֵלָה:

B2b [4b] My vigour was changed into the dry heat of summer. Selah.

Two extreme concepts are put together in this verse, namely ‘vigour’ (לְשֵׁדִי) and ‘dry heat’ (חַרְבָּנִי). ‘Vigour’ (לְשֵׁדִי) is a necessary element to live, and ‘dry heat’ (חַרְבָּנִי) is a place where ‘vigour’ (לְשֵׁדִי) is hard to be found. The psalmist is not arguing that he has vigour’ (לְשֵׁדִי) in ‘dry heat’ (חַרְבָּנִי), but that his vigour’ (לְשֵׁדִי) is ‘dry heat’ (חַרְבָּנִי). Comparing these two concepts as equals metaphorically, the psalmist alludes that some aspects are equal. Metaphors leave the meaning open for the reader’s interpretation. The way metaphors can function is to identify common characteristics and apply them. For instance, the standard features might be the drought’s (חַרְבָּנִי) uninhabitability, the absence of moisture (לְשֵׁדִי), the duration, the effects on the surrounding economy, affecting agriculture and the heightened chance of fire. The psalmist used one image to convey a picture of demise or near death to the reader.

קִיץ is translated as ‘summer’. Although ‘summer’ (קִיץ) is a noun, the term functions as a pronoun in a third-degree (Whitaker, et al., 1906). Israel has ‘a cool, rainy winter (October–April) and a dry, hot summer (May–September) (Stone, et al., 2019). As ‘summer’ (קִיץ) in Israel is ‘dry’ and ‘hot’, every summer has an element of ‘drought.’ The psalmist comparing his/her experience to ‘drought’, thus, is a yearly event, but the ‘drought’ (חַרְבָּנִי) of the ‘summer’ (קִיץ) conveys a meaning that ‘summer’ is a season that can end, but ‘dry heat’ adds the aspect of fatality to the metaphor.

In Psalm 91:14, the psalmist conveys the words of YHWH, saying that ‘because he loves me, therefore I will deliver him; I will protect him because he knows my name.’ From this passage, one can see that the relationship between humankind and YHWH is fixed. In line with the thesis, the splendour of forgiveness fixes the relationship

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<sup>179</sup> בְּ is a preposition that is translated mostly as “in”. חַרְבָּנִי only appears once in the Hebrew Bible. It has its origin from חָרַב which means ‘to parch’ (through drought).

between humankind and YHWH. In Psalm 91:16, YHWH says: ‘With [long life] I will satisfy him and show him my salvation.’ The relationship between humankind and YHWH (usually because of the splendour of forgiveness) leads to protection on the short term, and a happy life on the long term, like the motif in Psalm 32:3a and 4b.

#### 4.2.9. Forgiveness and ‘loyal love’

- Forgiveness takes away the ‘daily heavy hand’ of YHWH (Ps 32:4a), stops a flood (Ps 32:6c) and replaces it with ‘loyal love’ (Ps 32:10b).

כִּי יוֹמָם וְלַיְלָה תִּכְבֵּד עָלַי יָדְךָ

B2a [4a] For day and night, your hand was heavy upon me.

רַק לְשֵׁטֶף מַיִם רַבִּים אֲלֵיו לֹא יִגִּיעוּ:

D1c [6c] Surely at the flood of many waters, they will not reach him.

וְהַבּוֹטָח בֵּיתוֹהָ הֶסֶד יְסוּבְבֵנוּ:

F1b [10b] but for the one who trusts YHWH loyal love surrounds him.

In this motif, forgiveness replaces two threatening scenarios away (‘daily heavy hand’ of YHWH in Ps 32:4a and a flood Ps 32:6c) and replaces it with ‘loyal love’ in Ps 32:10b.

In Psalm 32:4a, that which occurred daily, and in the night,<sup>180</sup> was the hand of YHWH which ‘was heavy’. ‘Was heavy’ (תִּכְבֵּד) correlates with the idea of ‘forced silence’ (הֶחֱרַשְׁתִּי) (Ps 32:3a), as one needed a heavy hand to till. It is enhanced using ‘upon’ עַל, that demonstrates proximity. The psalmist is conveying a motif ‘ploughing,’ and then applying that image in the abstract to his situation show the immense pressure that the psalmist was in. The psalmist indicated in Psalm 32:1-2 that the way out of this tremendous pressure is by forgiveness (to ‘be happy/blessed’).

<sup>180</sup> In Psalm 32:4a, ‘for day and night’ or ‘daily’ refers to routine. ‘Daily’ (כָּל־הַיּוֹם) referred to tasks that repeat. What follows this phrase in Psalm 32:4a will automatically be categorised as daily activities, such as fetching water, cleaning, preparing food, eating and praying. The “daily” motif ‘daily’ (יוֹמָם) creates, is followed by the motif of ‘the night’. The study already revealed לַיְלָה creates a motif of someone being vulnerable in heightened danger, as well as giving someone time to reflect. Thus, the first audience would now understand what will follow is something happening “daily” in a time that one is vulnerable and able to reflect,

In Psalm 32:4b, the psalmist does not point to the face of YHWH, but rather his  $\text{יָדוֹ}$  (hand). In using the ‘hand’ ( $\text{יָדוֹ}$ ) of YHWH, the psalmist creates the relational space that the splendour of forgiveness fills.

In Psalm 32:6c,  $\text{לְשֹׁטָף}$ <sup>181</sup> is assessed both as a positive and negative meaning, ‘to cleanse’ positive, and ‘drown’ negative.  $\text{מֵי־רַבִּים}$ <sup>182</sup> is translated as ‘great water’. The phrase ‘great water’ is better explained when Psalm 93 is considered. Psalm 93 exalts God and proclaims his reign and claims that YHWH is higher than the ‘great waters’ (symbolically, life-threatening events). Similarly, in Psalm 32, the phrase ‘great waters’ as a life-threatening event is used to show that a flood is a life-threatening event. The psalmist emphasises that a great flood will not reach the threatened petitioner by using a standalone negation<sup>183</sup>.

The poet states that the waters will not reach the faithful petitioner, but in verse 10, he asserts that YHWH’s love will ‘surrounds him’ ( $\text{יְסוּבֵנִי}$ ). A comparison between the two appears here, where after the reader can replace the frightening picture of a threatening flood of water or wickedness, with an image of YHWH’s (covenant) love surrounding them.

In Psalm 32:10b,  $\text{וְהַבּוֹטֵחַ}$ <sup>184</sup> is translated as ‘but he who trusts,’ and based on the motif of the splendour of forgiveness present in Psalm 32, equates to ‘he who trusts YHWH to forgive.’

$\text{חֶסֶד}$  is translated as ‘loyal love.’  $\text{חֶסֶד}$  is a noun singular absolute. The psalmist replaces ‘your hand was heavy’ (Ps 32:4a) and the ‘water that will not come near’ (Ps

<sup>181</sup>  $\text{לְשֹׁטָף}$  is translated as “in a flood”. The term has a primitive root of: “to gush; by implication to inundate, cleanse; by analogy to gallop, conquer: - drown, flow over, (-whelm), rinse, run, rush, (thoroughly) wash (away)” according to Strong (1890). The description  $\text{מֵי־רַבִּים לְשֹׁטָף}$  is negative, and it correlates with  $\text{רַבִּים}$  (many)  $\text{מְכַאֲבִים}$  (sorrows) in verse 10.  $\text{שֹׁטָף}$  appears only six times in the Hebrew Bible, and only in the wisdom literature and prophets.

<sup>182</sup>  $\text{רַבִּים}$  means “great” or “many”. According to Strong (1890), it also means: “abundant (in quantity, size, age, number, rank, quality).”  $\text{רַבִּים}$  is a common term in the Hebrew Bible, with four hundred and fifty-eight appearances, evenly spread across all books (Strong, 1890).

<sup>183</sup>  $\text{לֹא}$  is a negation meaning “not”.

<sup>184</sup>  $\text{וְהַבּוֹטֵחַ}$  is a phrase consisting of a conjunction (ו), an article (ה) and a verb Qal participle masculine singular absolute.

32:6b) with ‘loyal love’ (דָּוָה) that will surround the reader (if he/she trusts) in (the forgiveness of) YHWH.

in Genesis 19:16-33, Abraham pleads with YHWH not to destroy Sodom. In Genesis 19:26, YHWH said: ‘If I find fifty righteous people in the city of Sodom, I will spare the whole place for their sake.’ As a last request, Abraham asks of YHWH, in Genesis 19:32: ‘May the Lord not be angry but let me speak just once more. What if only ten can be found there?’ He answered, ‘For the sake of ten, I will not destroy it.’ The image of humankind can be ‘righteous’ when humankind confesses their sin and receive the splendour of forgiveness. In other words, YHWH tells Abraham in this passage that Sodom won’t be destroyed if she received the splendour of forgiveness. Thus, forgiveness replaces threatening situations, like in Psalm 32, and replaces them with loyal love.

#### 4.2.10. Forgiveness and positioning

- Forgiveness positions one under the eye of YHWH (Ps 32:8c), which eases the stress at the start of a journey (Ps 32:8a-b).

אֲשַׁכֵּילְךָ וְאוֹרְךָ בַּדֶּרֶךְ - זֶה תִּלְמָד אֶיִּעֲצָה עָלֶיךָ עֵינַי:

E1a [8] I will instruct you and teach you

E1b in the way that you should go.

E1c I will advise you with my eye upon you.

Psalm 32:8 shows that forgiveness positions one under the eye of YHWH (Ps 32:8c), and that this position eases the stress at the start of a journey (Ps 32:8a-b).

In verse 8c, ‘I will advise you with my eye upon you’ (אֶיִּעֲצָה עָלֶיךָ עֵינַי)<sup>185</sup>. The poet chose not to use ‘hand’ (יָד)<sup>186</sup> in this context, but rather (עֵינַי), which confirms the view that the poet did not see YHWH as someone that smites, but someone that

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<sup>185</sup> אֶיִּעֲצָה is a verb Qal imperfect first person singular cohortative. עֵינַי means “to advise”, “to plan” or “to decide.” עֵינַי appears eighty times in the Hebrew Bible and only fourteen times in wisdom literature. עָלֶיךָ consists of a preposition suffixed with a pronoun second person masculine singular. עֵינַי consists of a noun singular construct suffixed with a pronoun first person singular.

<sup>186</sup> יָד appears eight hundred and eighty-three times. Seventy-eight times in Genesis, seventy times in Ezekiel and sixty-six times in the Psalms. It is more common to find the “hand” of YHWH on people. יָד appears one thousand six hundred and twelve times in the Hebrew Bible.

guides with his 'eye' (עֵינֹ). Kraus (1992:155) notes: 'The one who has been persecuted by the 'wicked ones' is certain that YHWH's eye (עֵינֹ) 'is toward the righteous' (Ps 34:15). Note the distinction that YHWH's eyes 'are towards the righteous' versus, like in Psalm 32:8, YHWH's eye (עֵינֹ) is 'upon' the psalmist. Thus, the psalmist views him-/herself as righteous. The psalmist could move around, and change his/her own position, but his/her position relative to the 'eye' (עֵינֹ) of YHWH will not change. The psalmist has thus a new position relative to the 'eye' (עֵינֹ) of YHWH.

YHWH informs the psalmist that he will 'instruct' (אֲשַׁכֵּילֶךָ)<sup>187</sup> him and 'teach' (וְאִוְרֶךְ)<sup>188</sup> him. Both these verbs are in the Hiph'il imperfect and are causative actions in the future: 'I will 'cause' you to know and 'cause' you understand.'

In verse 8, בְּדַרְדָּרָיו is translated as 'in the way that.' דָּרָךְ means 'road, way, distance, journey, manner, custom or behaviour' according to Whitaker, et al. (1906). Deciding on where to go was one of the critical decisions one had to take in the first community. It was not a decision quickly taken and inevitably had to follow through once started. Whenever a journey decision or planning for a decision was mentioned, the understanding was at the forefront of this conversation. The same applies to this context. Having a promise of YHWH to guide you during one of the hardest decisions would create a feeling of safety and comfort in the first readers. He will guide 'with' understanding.

With the new position of the psalmist relative to the 'eye' (עֵינֹ) of YHWH, the stress at the start of a journey is eased.

In Genesis 12:1, YHWH said to Abram. 'Go out from your land and from your relatives, and from the house of your father to the land that I will show you.' This is then followed by a reassurance that YHWH is not sending him alone, and, instead of using the symbolical language of Psalm 32:8c, the author makes it clear that Abram

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<sup>187</sup> אֲשַׁכֵּילֶךָ is a verb Hiph'il imperfect, first person singular and a suffixed pronoun, second person, masculine, singular. שָׁכַל is translated as "to have success"; "to understand or to comprehend" according to Whitaker, et al. (1906).

<sup>188</sup> וְאִוְרֶךְ consists of a conjunction; a Hiph'il verb, imperfect, first person singular and a suffixed pronoun, second person, masculine, singular.

will be under the 'eye' of YHWH.<sup>189</sup> Because of this position of Abram, his stress was eased, and he undertook the journey.<sup>190</sup>

### 4.3. Synthesis

This chapter showcases the splendour of forgiveness in Psalm 32. The psalm uses motifs to communicate aspects of forgiveness.

These motifs showed that forgiveness, not humankind's effort (Ps 32:5), lifts the guilt of my sin (Ps 32:1). It showed that people symbolically shoot an arrow and hits the target (Ps 32:5c), which spreads the splendour of forgiveness (Ps 32:11b) and that forgiveness restores humankind's relationship with YHWH (Ps 32:2b, 9a). This means that it creates breathing space (Ps 32:5) and call people righteous and upright (Ps 32:11). Forgiveness deals with the prism of iniquity (Ps 32:2, 5b) and the wicked (Ps 32:10a). It addresses the nature of man (Ps 32:2a), and then forgiveness invites the 'faithful ones' to pray (Ps 32:6a) and the 'righteous' to rejoice (Ps 32:11). Forgiveness corrects the image humankind has of YHWH (Ps 32:2a) that restores trust in YHWH to see him as a hiding place (Ps 32:7a) Without forgiveness, one is forced to keep silent (Ps 32:3a), but forgiveness demands gladness and joy (Ps 32:11). The absence of forgiveness hurts the 'innermost being' (Ps 32:3a) and life without forgiveness after a while is fatal, like a drought (Ps 32:4b). Forgiveness also takes away the 'daily heavy hand' of YHWH (Ps 32:4a), stops a flood (Ps 32:6c) and replaces it with 'loyal love' (Ps 32:10b). Forgiveness then positions one under the eye of YHWH (Ps 32:8c), and this position eases the stress at the start of a journey (Ps 32:8a-b).

These motifs highlight the meaning of the splendour of forgiveness.

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<sup>189</sup> Gen 12:2-3: "And I will make you a great nation, and I will bless you, and I will make your name great. And you will be a blessing. <sup>3</sup> And I will bless those who bless you, and those who curse you I will curse. And all families of the earth will be blessed in you."

<sup>190</sup> Gen 12:4-5: "And Abram went *out* as Yahweh had told him, and Lot went with him. Now Abram <sub>was</sub> seventy-five years old<sub>j</sub> when he went out from Haran. <sup>5</sup> And Abram took Sarai his wife, and Lot <sub>his</sub> nephew<sub>j</sub>, and all their possessions that they had gathered, and all the persons that they had acquired in Haran, and they went out to go to the land of Canaan. And they went to the land of Canaan.<sup>190</sup>

## CHAPTER 5 – SYNTHESIS

### 5.1. Introduction

The fourth objective is to outline a synthesis of the first three objectives, to provide a conclusive summary of what the splendour of forgiveness in Psalm 32 adds to the understanding of forgiveness.

Chapter five starts with an introduction, stating what the study was about and what the problem statement, aim and objectives, methodology and chapter outline were. This is followed by the research results, answering the question of what the study means the modern-day understanding of forgiveness is. This is followed by what the psalmist suggests future research of this study might be. This chapter and study are then concluded by a final conclusion and hypothesis.

#### 5.1.1. What was the study about?

Research on the book of the *Psalter* early on needs to choose whether to study the *Psalter* as a book or to study a psalm as a literary unit. Both Flint (2013:11-34) and Vermes (2013:35-37) agree that the book of the *Psalter* is a regularly developing collection and recent studies challenge the assumption of the existence of the Hebrew *Urtext*. Berlin (2013:39) also challenges the traditional assumptions about the Davidic authorship of the *Psalter*. Psalm 32 is a psalm 'of' or 'for' David when the text alone is utilised as a guiding factor.

Psalm 32 is a Maskil or instruction, according to the heading. Körting (2013:56-63) studied what the way Christian and Jewish scholars understand under 'divine inspiration' and 'human instruction'. In Psalm 32, this question particularly needs to be addressed, and her input about this topic was of value. Körting critiques medieval Jewish scholars that tried to see any text as divine and said: 'the inspired nature of the texts – their 'divine' content – prevents these exegetes from using unlimited exegetical freedom but leads them instead to align their reading per tradition'.

Gillingham (2013:64-82) presents a model of a 'life-centred' reading of the psalms, using Psalm 137 as an example. A 'life-centred' reading is equally interesting for Psalm 32. To summarise Gillingham's 'life-centred' approach to the reading of a psalm: It is when neither a Davidic approach nor a Christ-centred approach does justice to the meaning of a psalm. When this happens, one needs to look further than



contexts and find the meaning of the psalm that is true in life. For Psalm 32, a 'life-centred' approach would yield meaning about life, example: 'the splendour of forgiveness in Psalm 32 is that God administers forgiveness, and the joy of our newfound forgiveness brings healing to our situations.' This statement can be true in any religious context, as the 'way to forgiveness' differs in all religions, religions might agree to what the effect of forgiveness is.

Snyman (2004:155) notes that Psalm 32 has a rich history. Firstly, it was one of Augustine's favourite Psalms. Secondly, Luther called the psalm a Pauline Psalm (along with 51, 130, and 143). Thirdly, Psalm 32 is the second of the seven penitential Psalms of the early church.

Brown (2014:1-23) wrote an article entitled: 'The Psalms: An Overview'. The article starts by saying: 'the *Psalter* features various *genres* and rich diversity of perspectives. The book of Psalms strikes nearly every theological chord that resounds throughout the Hebrew Scriptures, from covenant and history to creation and wisdom.'

Some scholars highlight forgiveness as one of the intents of Psalm 32. Longman and Enns (2008:932) notes that Psalm 32 is one of the psalms that encourages worship. Worship is encouraged due to the deliverance of sin received from YHWH and thus points towards forgiveness as an intent of Psalm 32. Research into Psalm 32 adds nuance to the knowledge of the splendour of forgiveness. The nuance added is supported by evidence gained from research into the psalm.

### **5.1.2. What was the problem-setting, aim and objectives, methodology, chapter outline?**

#### **5.1.2.1. Problem-setting**

The text of Psalm 32 does not explain its *Sitz im Leben*. There are no footnotes of the original psalmist that tells the reader what the use of the psalm should be. Moreover, even if there was a footnote, the psalmist could not know the extent of the psalm he/she/they have written. Considering the research done on Psalm 32, there is evidence that shows Psalm 32 to have forgiveness as a central theme. The problem of the *Sitz im Leben* of Psalm 32, using forgiveness as the theme of the psalm, was addressed in this study.

Forgiveness is a rich topic. The understanding of forgiveness determines how people see their relationship with God. Each mention of 'forgiveness' in the Old

Testament adds different nuances to each sense of forgiveness. Psalm 32 adds a unique nuance to the understanding of forgiveness. This study, however, did not solely focus on forgiveness as a theological term. It also focused on the splendour of forgiveness as contained in Psalm 32 and reached an understanding of the nuance that forgiveness adds in Psalm 32.

#### **5.1.2.2. Aim and objectives**

This study aimed to define the splendour of forgiveness that Psalm 32 adds to the understanding of forgiveness in the Old Testament and to better the understanding of what the *Sitz im Leben* of Psalm 32 could be.

The first objective of the study executed a synchronic analysis of Psalm 32 to understand the structure and *genre* of Psalm 32, as well as Psalm 25-34. The synchronic analysis provided answers to questions regarding text and translation, outline and detailed analysis. This objective yielded clues to what possible uses the psalm could have, where the psalm was utilised, what meaning phrases within Psalm 32 yielded, and what nuances of forgiveness Psalm 32 added.

The second objective was to execute a diachronic analysis of Psalm 32 to understand the history and the *Sitz im Leben* of Psalm 32. The history of Psalm 32 included the redactional history and the tradition history.

The third objective was to outline the theology of Psalm 32. This objective specifically studied the splendour of forgiveness in Psalm 32 and addressed some of the theological topics connected with Psalm 32.

The fourth objective was to outline a synthesis of the first three objectives, to provide a conclusive summary of what the splendour of forgiveness in Psalm 32 added to the understanding of forgiveness.

#### **5.1.2.3. Methodology**

This study was a literature and exegetical study. The literature study provided an overview of current research, while the exegetical study provided the exegesis to determine the meaning of the text.

The literature study aided the research that followed in different ways. The literature study ensured that the research is relevant. It provided an answer to this study whether the current hypothesis has been proven or disproven. The literature

study highlighted the need for this study by offering areas of research that has not yet been studied or explored. The literature study took place in part in § 1.7 'Literature review', but analysis throughout the study rested upon knowledge gathered from the literature study.

The exegetical study was done as part of the synchronic analysis. It gave a detailed analysis of Psalm 32 by systematically applying different tools to determine different meanings and nuances each phrase has. During this study, only the final form of the text was studied, as seen in the BHS. The study used the dictionary of Strong (Strong, 1890) as well the Abridged Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew-English Lexicon of the Old Testament (Whitaker et al., 1906) to determine meanings of words and phrases in Psalm 32. The exegetical study compared how words and phrases, that were utilised in Psalm 32, with the rest of the Hebrew Bible to yield nuances that words have.

The study furthermore did a synchronic and diachronic analysis. The Swiss linguist, Ferdinand de Saussure (1857–1913) first made the distinction between synchronic and diachronic analysis (Sampaolo, 2016:1). The synchronic analysis did a study of the text at present or at a point in time. The synchronic analysis done in this study looked at the time when the psalm was already part of the cultic life in the Ancient Near East. For this reason, a large portion of the Hebrew Bible could be utilised to add nuance to words and phrases found in Psalm 32.

A diachronic analysis followed this analysis. Another term for a diachronic analysis is historical aspects of the psalm. This part of the study focuses on the history of the text. Aspects of the history of the psalm include the formation, tradition and redaction history of Psalm 32. This analysis studied specifically the historical *Sitz im Leben*, traditional history and redactional history. The investigation into the redactional history analysed the formation Psalm 32 into its current form, its placement in the section of Psalms 25-34 as well as in the first book of the *Psalter*, Psalms 1-41.

#### **5.1.2.4. Outline of chapters**

##### **5.1.2.4.1. Introduction**

The first chapter of the study is an introduction-chapter and the following topics were discussed: an introduction, actuality of the research was explained, the research question was addressed, aim and objectives were set out, methodologies were

described, hypothesis was stated, chapters were outlined, terminologies that were utilised in the research were defined, the orthography was described, and a literature review was done.

#### **5.1.2.4.2. Synchronic analysis**

In chapter two, a short introduction was given, followed by a study of the *genre* and *Sitz im Leben* of Psalm 32 and Psalms 25-34. It was followed by a structural analysis that outlined the text and translation of Psalm 32 and gave an outline of the psalm, followed by a detailed analysis of the text.

#### **5.1.2.4.3. Diachronic analysis**

Chapter three explained diachronic aspects with an introduction, followed by the historical *Sitz im Leben* of Psalm 32, a tradition history (historical and cultic) and concludes with a redactional history, Psalms 25-34 and Book I (Pss 1-41).

#### **5.1.2.4.4. Theology of Psalm 32 – Splendour of forgiveness**

Chapter four started with an introduction, followed by theological claims found in Psalm 32 about the splendour of forgiveness. The chapter elaborates on its significance.

#### **5.1.2.4.5. Synthesis**

Chapter five started with an introduction, stating what the study was about and what the problem statement, aim and objectives, methodology and chapter outline were. It was followed by the research results, answering the question of what the study meant to the modern-day understanding of forgiveness. It is followed by what I suggest the future research of this study might be. A conclusion and hypothesis then conclude this chapter.

### **5.2. Research results**

In this chapter, the study has put together all the pieces examined in this study. Pieces like the diachronic analysis, the synchronic analysis, the tradition-historical links of the intend and splendour of forgiveness. What this study means for the modern-day study of Psalm 32, as well as the understanding of forgiveness, was discussed.

#### **5.2.1. This study's meaning for the modern-day study of Psalm 32?**

Modern-day study of the Psalms is still influenced by the works of Hermann Gunkel, and the study of the *Sitz im Leben* or the place of a psalm in the life of the first community helps the modern study Psalm 32. The *Sitz im Leben* of Psalm 32 is the

prayer community, whether that be in the temple or cultic or family life. The *Sitz* of Psalm 32 provided a reason why the splendour of forgiveness was explained in Psalm 32.

The study of Psalm 32 provided evidence that it is part of a more extensive collection, Psalm 25 – 34, and modern-day study similarly could yield significant results by studying Psalm 32 in its broader context. Gillingham (2019:163) highlights this significance. This study showed that there are links between phrases in the text of Psalm 32. These links are not monolithic, and the organic nature of these links are shown in Table 1.1 to Table 1.6. A thorough analysis of Psalm 32 was done in § 2.3.3 and by studying the meaning of the words used by the Psalmist, and his/her choice of words yielded results to support the hypothesis of this study.

The modern-day study of Psalm 32 could keep in mind that the psalmist in Psalm 32 used rich metaphors, understood the intricacies of his language and used them to the best of his/her abilities to convey meaning to the audience. These meanings come to the fore when connections are made between words, phrases, verses and other Psalms and the Hebrew Bible. Modern-day studies of the Psalms could continue to pursue to discover rich metaphors and the intricacies involved with it.

### **5.2.2. This study's meaning for the understanding of forgiveness?**

The splendour of forgiveness portrayed in Psalm 32, when studying the motifs and historical links found in Psalm 32, paints forgiveness as a necessity in the lives of the first audience. And as the historical links revealed, forgiveness formed part of a large portion of the narratives in the Hebrew Bible.

This study portrayed forgiveness as an act by YHWH to restore the relationship broken by sin. Humankind accepts this forgiveness, provided by YHWH, by way of 'confessing'. 'Confessing' can not be taking part in initiating forgiveness. Forgiveness is an act initiated and performed by YHWH towards humankind.

Psalm 32:5 in the detailed analysis showed that the Psalmist confessed, but also attempted other actions, none of which brought about the splendour of forgiveness. The confession of the author in verse 5, only shows that he/she is now ready to accept God's forgiveness. As verse 6 starts with 'but', YHWH forgave the sins of the psalmist, making him righteous (v11), and ignoring all previous actions of the psalmist, even the act of confession.

The psalmist then, open to the YHWH's forgiveness, can continue to rely on, receive and be thankful for the splendour of forgiveness of YHWH. If ever he/she again feels unworthy of the forgiveness of YHWH, the psalmist may confess again.

Forgiveness as portrayed in Psalm 32, adds a personal nuance to the understanding of forgiveness and made the process of receiving forgiveness, not in society, but rather personal, easier to understand and experience on daily.

Further studies on the understanding of forgiveness may keep in mind that the splendour of forgiveness, as portrayed in Psalm 32 has a personal tone.

### **5.2.3. Future work**

These are the questions future studies could address regarding this study:

- Does a study of the first book of the Psalms add the same nuance of the splendour of forgiveness that Psalm 32 adds?
- Does a study of the Psalms add the same nuance of the splendour of forgiveness that Psalm 32 adds?
- Does any other approach, except the form-critical approach, add a similar nuance to the understanding of forgiveness?
- Can the nuance of forgiveness added in Psalm 32 be seen in faith communities today?
- What similarities and differences do the added nuance of the understanding of forgiveness in Psalm 32 have to the understanding of forgiveness in the New Testament?
- When a study on the nuance that each book of the Bible adds to the splendour of forgiveness, how would they compare?
- If Psalm 32 and 33 are seen as a unit, would it alter the nuance of forgiveness that Psalm 32 adds?
- How are offerings for the forgiveness portrayed in the Psalms?

### **5.3. Final conclusion and hypothesis**

The synchronic analysis, diachronic analysis and theology: the splendour of forgiveness of Psalm 32 yielded evidence that suggests that the splendour of forgiveness in Psalm 32 provides insight into the understanding of forgiveness in the psalms and the first faith community. Considering the broader context of the first book

of the psalms (1-41), the broader book of the *Psalter*, the writings and the Pentateuch, evidence does exist to suggest the motif created by Psalm 32 about forgiveness was not foreign to the first community, and that Psalm 32 indeed adds a nuance of the splendour of forgiveness. Psalm 32 suggests that actions from the first audience are not part of the forgiveness process and that the act of forgiveness starts after someone confesses, but the action lies exclusively with YHWH.

To end with the words of Barton (2013:261), 'Psalm study has enormous theological, devotional, liturgical, and spiritual potential, and these essays, taken together, help to show us how this potential can be realized.' The exegesis of Psalm 32 has confirmed this theological significance.

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