

'THE WORD OF YAHWEH IS RIGHT': PSALM 33 AS A TORAH-PSALM

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ABSTRACT

This article investigates some of the similarities between the Torah-psalms and Psalm 33. It is suggested that the 'Torah-psalms' should be re-contextualised and understood as part of a post-exilic endeavour to provide an interpretation of the emerging 'canon' of Hebrew scripture for the faithful of the late Persian period. Psalm 33 can also be counted amongst the literary products of this endeavour. The service it rendered to its audience was to establish a connection between Yahweh's work of creation, his redemption of Israel and his divine rule over all the world through the power of his 'word'.

INTRODUCTION

Psalms 1, 19 and 119 are usually singled out and described as 'Torah-psalms'. They are psalms which were composed by people who were particularly strongly influenced by wisdom traditions and in which the 'teaching' or 'torah' of Yahweh plays a central role. Because of the wisdom connection, one can say that in these three psalms, the 'torah of Yahweh' takes over some of the functions ascribed to wisdom in the book of Proverbs. According to Psalm 1:1–2, for example, it is a love for the 'torah of Yahweh' which prevents the righteous from stepping on the way of sinners and going with them, the same things the wisdom student is being prevented from doing if he listens to the 'instruction' of his father and the 'teaching' (תורה) of his mother in Proverbs (Pr 1:8, 15). Similarly, according to Psalm 19:8, the 'witness' of Yahweh, used in parallel to his 'torah', is able to make the naive student wise (תהל לפתאים ערמה) just as the proverbs of Solomon can give prudence to the naive (החכים פתי) (Pr 1:4). It would seem that the 'torah of Yahweh' serves in the Torah-psalms as a hypernym which includes wisdom and its modes of teaching amongst its subordinate terms.

There are many other psalms which were composed by exponents of wisdom thinking and in some of them, the 'torah of Yahweh' or the 'torah' of God is also mentioned (e.g. Ps 37, where the 'torah of his God' is mentioned in v. 31; cf. also Pss 40:9; 78:5 and 10; 89:31; 94:12 and 105:45). But there are certain characteristics which make Psalms 1, 19 and 119 special. According to James Luther Mays,

- In each of them, the instruction of the Lord is the central organizing topic, the primary reality in the relation of man to God (Mays 1987:3).
- All three bring together elements of vocabulary, style and theology from diverse parts of the emerging Hebrew canon of scripture (Mays 1987:4).
- Through their placement in the Psalter, the topics of torah and kingship of Yahweh are combined. This last point refers to the presence of a royal psalm adjacent to each of the Torah-psalms (the paired combinations are Psalms 1–2; 18–19 and 118–119; cf. Mays 1987:10).

On the basis of these characteristics, Mays argues that these psalms are significant indicators of how the Psalter was understood and used by its final editors (Mays 1987:3).

Psalm 33 is a very late wisdom psalm which was also composed using words and phrases that remind the informed reader of an impressive variety of contexts in the Hebrew Bible. Markus Witte (2002:536–541) argues, with good justification, for a date of origin for the psalm in the third century BCE. It does not refer to the 'torah' of Yahweh, but the 'word' (דבר) of Yahweh plays an important role in it. This is significant, since the 'word' of Yahweh is used as one of the parallel descriptions of Yahweh's 'torah' in Pss 19 and 119. In addition to this, Psalm 33 itself implicitly addresses the kingship of Yahweh in language which reminds one of Psalm 2, the royal psalm which is paired with Psalm 1. Yahweh's perspective from where he sits enthroned in heaven (Ps 33:13–14) is similar to that described in Psalm 2:4. The counsel and plans of hostile kings and peoples are described as futile in Psalm 33:10–11, similar to the description found in Psalm 2:1–5. Fear and trembling are mentioned as the correct response to Yahweh's display of power in both Psalm 33:8 and Psalm 2:11. Those who display the correct attitude by seeking refuge in Yahweh are described as 'blessed' (אשרי) in Psalm 2:12, just as the people whose god is Yahweh in Psalm 33:12.

However, despite the similarities between Psalm 33 and the Torah-psalms, the purpose of this paper is not to propose that Psalm 33 should be included as one of the group of Torah-psalms. It rather argues that it is perhaps necessary to contextualise the Torah-psalms again. Together with Psalm 33 and a number of other wisdom compositions, the Torah-psalms form part of a group of 'interpretational' or 'exegetical' psalms. In these 'exegetical' psalms, theologians from the late Persian period sought to provide a perspective from creation and from the history and literary heritage of Israel to enable worshippers of Yahweh to live a fulfilled life in the present and hope for a blessed future under the divine rule of Yahweh.

These 'interpretational' psalms did not evolve in the temple cult, but are literary creations. Gunkel resorted to the term 'Mischgattungen' to describe their genre, because they were, in his view, remnants of cultic songs deprived of a cultic setting (Gunkel-Begriff 1933:398). Mowinckel in turn spoke of 'learned psalmography' (cf. Mathys 1994:248–251, who provides a very insightful overview of the development in isolating and defining this heterogeneous group of psalms). During the late Persian period or perhaps the early Hellenistic period when the Torah-psalms originated, there was a rich

phase of literary activity and creativity in Judah. Exponents of wisdom thinking edited some existing psalms during this time, but they also created many others, inter alia the three so-called Torah-psalms. The scope of this literary activity which originated within wisdom circles is evident from the investigation of Bernard Gosse (2008). Scribes, who had close connections with the singers and poets who formed part of the personnel of the temple (Mathys 1994:249–250), perceived the literary heritage of Israel as an emerging canon of scripture which had to be interpreted and explained to their contemporaries. To do this, they would compose 'interpretational' psalms to define the meaning of Israel's history and literature and to explain the future purpose of Yahweh's people under his divine rule.

These exegetes did not make use of the book of Psalms alone to comment on the religious traditions of Israel. They also inserted their comments into the Pentateuch, the torah 'proper' as it were, as well as into the earlier and latter prophetic books. Mathys (1994) did us a great favour by isolating and studying many of these interpretative texts. In order to demarcate 'scripture' from interpretation and a pre-exilic perspective from a post-exilic or eschatological one (see Mathys 1994:318), these exponents of wisdom thinking would predominantly use poetry to cast their own voice into the mouths of prominent Israelites encountered in the body of religious texts – Israelites such as Moses (e.g. Ex 15:1–9, Dt 32:1–47; 33), Hannah (1 Sm 2:1–10), David (cf. 1 Chr 16:7–36), Solomon (cf. 1 Ki 8:12–13, 23–53, 54–61), Hezekiah (cf. Is 38:9–20), Jeremiah (e.g. Jr 32:16–25), Jonah (Jnh 2:3–11), Daniel and others. They would insert these poetic prayers and speeches into narrative material in order to provide a hermeneutical perspective for the interpretation of the surrounding texts. This is particularly true of the poetic 'frame' around the books of Samuel, namely the Song of Hannah in 1 Samuel 2 and David's Song of Victory in 2 Samuel 22 (= Ps 18). These two songs were meant to provide a hermeneutical key with which the history of David could be read. They explain that Saul's arrogance led to his downfall and that David's humility and complete trust in Yahweh, coupled with his unwillingness to touch the anointed of Yahweh, led to his elevation. But these exegetes also, probably simultaneously, inserted notes into the Psalter. They added headings to individual psalms to contextualize them as prayers of David, but also of Moses (Ps 90:1), Solomon (cf. Ps 127:1) and other religious leaders. In addition to this, they would further also edit the historical narratives about David so that his history would correspond better and more closely to the contents of certain psalms, especially those to which they added biographical notes about the life of David.

Because they were composed by the same (or like-minded) people who also created the Torah-psalms, these prayers and speeches inserted into the narrative contexts display many similarities with the Torah-psalms, but also with other, closely related wisdom psalms in which the role of the torah is perhaps not immediately obvious. It will be argued in this paper that Psalm 33 is a wisdom psalm which was composed at the same time as the Torah-psalms, by the same people and which is consequently closely related to them in its endeavour to interpret the literary heritage of Israel. Similar to the Torah-psalms, Psalm 33 was composed by using motifs, words and phrases from the existing corpus of religious texts, creating an allusive network between them. Similar to the Torah-psalms, there are indications that the authors of Psalm 33 were aware of the fact that the body of religious texts to which the psalm alludes serve as an interface between Yahweh and humanity and similar to them (and the prayers and speeches by wisdom exponents in the historical material), the psalm serves to interpret the role of this 'canon' of literature, described in the Torah-psalms as the teaching of Yahweh or his 'torah', but referred to in Psalm 33 as his 'word' (דבר).

Due its being part of the preamble to the Psalter, the 'torah of Yahweh' which is mentioned in Psalm 1:2, has in the past often been interpreted as referring primarily to the Psalter. This is a misconception. The 'torah' or 'teaching' of Yahweh

in Psalm 1 includes the Psalter, especially the Torah-psalms themselves, but the way in which the psalm was composed, making use of 'biblical' expressions and thereby creating a web of intertextual references to all parts of the emerging Hebrew canon of scripture, clearly indicates that 'torah' refers inclusively to the Pentateuch, the early and latter prophets and even the writings such as Proverbs and Psalms. This way of composing a psalm has been described as 'anthological' (in the work of André Robert and his student Alfons Deissler). It refers to a composition which makes use of 'biblical' language to such an extent that flashes of reminiscence of parts of scripture succeed one another continually in the mind of the reader who has an intimate knowledge of the whole 'canon'.

Mays (1987:8) was aware of the close connexion between the torah-psalms and other wisdom psalms. He identified fourteen other psalms which, he says, express the same theology that the instruction of the Lord is the concern of the righteous and the effective factor in determining how life plays out. These are Psalms 18, 25, 33, 78, 89, 93, 94, 99, 103, 105, 111, 112, 147 and 148. This list could be extended (e.g. with Pss 31, 34 and 37). By studying the similarities between Psalm 33 and the three Torah-psalms and especially the ingenious way in which all of these psalms interpret the Pentateuch and link it to other parts of the canon, we hope to bring greater clarity about what is meant with 'torah' in the Torah-psalms and to throw some light on the theological perspective and modus operandi of the theologians who gave us the Psalter in the form we have it today and also the hermeneutical lens through which they wanted their readers to read the Hebrew Bible in its entirety.

THE TEXT AND A TRANSLATION OF PSALM 33

In this article, the very special poetic and structural features of Psalm 33 will not be discussed in detail. This has been the subject of a number of fairly recent studies (cf. Gahler 1998; Weber 2001; Witte 2002; Jacobson 2008; and Zenger 2009). The description given here will also be discussed more fully in a forthcoming publication by Potgieter. What follows is therefore only a general discussion of its form.

The psalm consists of three stanzas, each containing three strophes. Stanza I consists of an extended call to praise Yahweh (strophe A, vv.1–3) and the twofold motivation for this: His character, which is evident in his word (strophe B, vv.4–5) and his acts of creation and redemption through his word (strophe C, vv.6–7). Stanza II is about the response of humanity to Yahweh's revelation of himself in creation and redemption: All the earth should stand in awe in view of what he has done through his spoken word (strophe D, vv.8–9); his deeds have shown his ability to frustrate the endeavours of all peoples, but he favours one nation (strophe E, vv.10–12); Yahweh is the creator who consequently understands the motives of his creatures (strophe F, vv.13–15). Stanza III is about Yahweh's control over the world. Human power and endeavours can achieve nothing on their own and offer no hope for rescue (strophe G, vv.16–17); the relationship with Yahweh is all that counts, because only he can save (strophe H, vv.18–19); consequently the in-group of the author should wait for Yahweh, rejoice in him and trust him completely (strophe I, vv.20–21). Strophe A (the call to praise) corresponds with strophe I (a confession of hope and trust), because these are the only sections where the in-group is explicitly involved. In the middle stanza, strophe D corresponds to strophe F, so that a parallel is formed between the human response to Yahweh's acts (D) and Yahweh's knowledge and understanding of all humanity (F). Within strophe E there is antithesis between the counsel and thoughts of the nations (verse line 10) and the counsel and thoughts of Yahweh (verse line 11). A second antithesis is formed between the 'nations' and 'peoples' (verse line 10) and the one, elected 'nation' and 'people' of Yahweh, which forms part of his 'counsel' and 'thoughts'

TABLE 1
The stichometric structure of Psalm 33

I	A						
		1	רָנְנוּ צְדִיקִים בַּיהוָה לְיִשְׁרָאֵל נְאוּהַ תְּהַלֵּה:	Rejoice over Yahweh, you righteous ones; praise is fitting for the upright.	Call to praise	Praise Yahweh for his being and acts of creating order	
		2	הוֹדוּ לַיהוָה בְּכִנּוֹר בְּנִבְלַת עֶשׂוֹר וְזָמְרוּ לּוֹ:	Give thanks to Yahweh with the lyre, with the ten-stringed harp, sing to him.			
		3	שִׁירוּ לּוֹ שִׁיר חֲדָשׁ הִטִּיבוּ נְגִן בְּתִרְעוּהָ:	Sing to him a new song, make beautiful, loud music.			
	B	4	כִּי־יֵשֶׁר דְּבַר־יְהוָה וְכָל־מַעֲשָׂהוּ בְּאֱמוּנָה:	For the word of Yahweh is right and all his deeds are trustworthy.	Motivation: Character		
		5	אֱהָב צְדָקָה וּמִשְׁפָּט חֶסֶד יְהוָה מְלֵאָה הָאָרֶץ:	He loves righteousness and justice, the faithfulness of Yahweh fills the earth.			
	C	6	בְּדִבְרֵי יְהוָה שָׁמַיִם נַעֲשׂוּ וּבְרוּחַ פִּי כָל־צְבָאָם:	By the word of Yahweh heaven was made, and through the breath of his mouth, its whole army.	Motivation: Creation		
		7	כָּנָס כַּנֹּד מֵי הַיָּם נָתַן בְּאֲצֻרוֹת תְּרוּמוֹת:	He gathers the water of the sea like a dam, he puts the deep waters into storerooms.			
II	D	8	יִירָאוּ מִיְהוָה כָּל־הָאָרֶץ מִמֶּנּוּ יִזְרוּ כָל־יֹשְׁבֵי תְּבֵל:	Let all the earth be in awe of Yahweh, let all the inhabitants of the world fear him.	Awe in view of creation		Let all fear Yahweh, he is eternal and all-knowing: happy are his people
		9	כִּי הוּא אָמַר וַיְהִי הוּא־צִוָּה וַיַּעֲמֵד:	For he spoke and it came into being, he commanded and there it stood.			
	E	10	יְהוָה הַפִּיר עֲצַת־גּוֹיִם הֵנִיא מַחְשְׁבוֹת עַמִּים:	Yahweh destroys the counsel of the nations, he thwarts the thoughts of the peoples.	Peoples no threat to Yahweh		
		11	עֲצַת יְהוָה לְעוֹלָם תַּעֲמֵד מַחְשְׁבוֹת לְבוֹ לְדָר וָדָר:	The counsel of Yahweh stands for ever, the thoughts of his heart from generation to generation.			
		12	אֲשֶׁר־יִהְיֶה אֱלֹהֵי הָעָם בָּחַר לְנַחֲלָה לּוֹ:	Happy is the nation whose god is Yahweh; the people whom he chose as his heritage.			
	F	13	מִשָּׁמַיִם הִבִּיט יְהוָה רָאָה אֶת־כָּל־בְּנֵי הָאָדָם:	From heaven Yahweh looks down, he sees all humanity.	Yahweh knows motives of all peoples		
		14	מִמְּכוֹן־שִׁבְתּוֹ הַשָּׁמַיִם אֵל כָּל־יֹשְׁבֵי הָאָרֶץ:	From the place where he lives, he watches over all the inhabitants of the earth.			
		15	הַיֹּצֵר יְחַד לָבָם הַמְבִּיין אֶל־כָּל־מַעֲשֵׂיהֶם:	He who fashions the hearts of them all, who understands all their actions.			
III	G	16	אִין־הַמֶּלֶךְ נוֹשָׁע בְּרַב־חַיִל גִּבּוֹר לֹא־יִצָּל בְּרַב־כֹּחַ:	A king is not saved through a large army, a hero is not delivered through great strength.	Power no security	Power is no security, only Yahweh can help: we trust in him	
		17	שָׁקַר הַסּוּס לְתִשׁוּעָה וּגְבֹרַת חֵילוֹ לֹא יִמְלֹט:	A horse is vain hope for salvation and through its great power it cannot save.			
	H	18	הִנֵּה עֵין יְהוָה אֶל־יִרְאָיו לְמִי־חָלִים לְחַסְדּוֹ:	Behold, the eye of Yahweh is on those who fear him, those whose hope is in his unfailing love	Relationsh ip with Yahweh		
		19	לְהַצִּיל מִמּוֹת נַפְשָׁם וּלְחַיֹּתֵם בְּרָעֵב:	to save them from death, and to keep them alive in a famine.			
	I	20	נִשְׁנֹנוּ חַפְתָּה לַיהוָה עֲזָרוֹ וּמִגִּנָּנוּ הוּא:	We wait patiently for Yahweh, our help and our shield is he.	Confession and prayer		
		21	כִּי־בּוֹ יִשְׂמַח לִבֵּנוּ כִּי בְשֵׁם קֹדְשׁוֹ בְּטַחְנוּ:	Indeed, in him our heart rejoices, yes, in his holy name we trust.			
		22	יְהִי־חַסְדְּךָ יְהוָה עֲלֵינוּ כַּאֲשֶׁר יַחַלְנוּ לָךְ:	Let your loving-kindness be on us, Yahweh in the same way as we wait for you.			

Article #431
Verbum et Ecclesia

(verse line 12). The result of this is that verse line 11 is portrayed as the central pronouncement within a concentric structure.

THE INTERPRETATIONAL OR EXEGETICAL CHARACTER AND FUNCTION OF THE INTERTEXTUAL ALLUSIONS IN PSALMS 1, 19 AND 33

It has been established beyond any doubt that the authors of the three Torah-psalms and of the wisdom psalms in general consciously attempted to establish a web of intertextual connections between their creations and existing material in what they must have recognised as an emerging canon of scripture. Mays (1987:7) expresses uncertainty about whether this was a subliminal or self-conscious process of establishing links, but remarks that in either case, the implications are the same. Seeing as the authors of these interpretational psalms were strongly under the influence of wisdom-thinking, the links with Proverbs are especially evident. Bernard Gosse (2006:387–393) has demonstrated how Psalm 1, Psalm 19 and Psalm 119 drew inspiration from Proverbs 1:20–23 by interpreting ‘torah’ in terms of ‘wisdom’ in the context of the Psalms. It concerns the effect on the ‘naive’ person, a theme taken up in Psalms 19 and 119, whilst in terms of the ‘mockers’, the ‘torah’ in Psalm 1 takes over the role of ‘wisdom’. But there is a strong connection also to the Pentateuch. Establishing connections between wisdom material and the Pentateuch created all kinds of interpretational possibilities, resulting in a shift in various theological perspectives.

PSALM 1

There is no doubt that Psalm 1 has wisdom origins. It displays a close affinity to wisdom forms and ideas. The metaphor of life as a road on which one travels (which characterizes Ps 1:1; 6), the value of ‘torah’ to preserve one on this road (Ps 1:2) and the danger of associating with the ‘wicked’ (cf. Pr 2:22), ‘sinners’ (cf. Pr 1:10) or with ‘mockers’ (cf. Pr 3:34), were all extracted from Proverbs 1–3 (see Pr 1:1, 8–15, 22). Even the image of a tree and its fruit symbolising the consequences of human action (Ps 1:3), comes from Pr 1:31 where it says of those who hated knowledge and did not choose the fear of Yahweh, ‘so they will have to eat from the fruit of their way...’ (מפרי דרכם). The poet who composed Psalm 1 thus evidently poured his composition into a wisdom form. Furthermore, Mays (1987:4) also refers to its being shaped on the model of an antithetical saying, contrasting the two ways of conduct and the end result of both. Its opening line, beginning with ‘Blessed is the man...’ (אשרי האיש) would immediately remind the reader or hearer who is well versed in the Hebrew Bible not of the Pentateuch, but of the book of Proverbs. In Proverbs 3:13, 8:34 and 28:14 there are three proverbs beginning with ‘blessed is the person who...’ (אשרי אדם). The first of these three states, ‘blessed is the person who has found wisdom...’. By using these wisdom forms in a psalm on the ‘torah of Yahweh’, the author is actually commenting on the torah. He is stating that the torah of Yahweh is similar to the torah of wisdom – that torah is a form of wisdom which can help one to live life happily and successfully. Such wisdom perspectives can also be found in the torah. For instance, in Deuteronomy 4:6 the ‘rules’ (חוקים) and ‘legal decisions’ (משפטים) which Moses taught the Israelites are described by him as their ‘wisdom’ (חכמתכם) and their ‘understanding’ (ביתנתכם). Because wisdom (חכמה) is more precious than all desirable things (כל־חפצים, Pr 3:15; 8:11), it comes as no surprise that the righteous person’s desire or delight (חפצו) is for the torah of Yahweh (Ps 1:2).

But the torah of Yahweh is also more than wisdom teaching. This is why the image in Psalm 1:3 of the tree planted next to canals is also reminiscent of prophetic material (cf. Jr 17:7–8). The Jeremiah text was similarly composed or edited by exponents of wisdom thinking and it is difficult to determine which was

first, or whether they originated more or less simultaneously. Nevertheless, the similarities between Psalm 1 and Jeremiah 17 establish connections between the Torah-psalm and a prophetic book. Through similar allusions to the book of Ezekiel, the author of Psalm 1 hints at the divine origin of the nourishment found in the torah, because such living and life-giving water could only originate from the temple (Ez 17:8; 19:10; 47:12; cf. Ps 92:13–15) and thus in the final analysis, from Yahweh. The value of dedication to the ‘torah’ and the success it brings (Ps 1:3) are also confirmed with the help of the book of Joshua (Jos 1:8). This connection in turn implies that ‘torah’ in Psalm 1 definitely also refers to the Pentateuch (Ps 1:2), because Joshua 1:7 describes this torah as ‘the whole torah which Moses, my servant, commanded you...’. The image of Yahweh’s judgement being like wind chasing chaff (Ps 1:4) is similarly supported by an allusion to Isaiah 17:4 (cf. also Ps 35:5). Once again, the direction of borrowing does not really matter – both contexts were created by exponents of wisdom thinking and were possibly mutually tailored to speak the same language. Torah, therefore, does not contain only ‘wisdom’, it is also found in the Pentateuch, the early prophetic books, the latter prophetic books and the Psalter itself. The ‘walking’, ‘standing’ and ‘sitting’ mentioned in Psalm 1:1 are not only aspects of the wisdom metaphor of life as a journey, but also related to the responsibility to teach children in the walk of life the ‘words’ (דברים) which Yahweh commanded (כי צוה): This should happen when ‘sitting’ at home, when ‘on the way’, when ‘lying down’ to sleep and when ‘getting up’ to resume daily activities (Dt 6:7).

By connecting all parts of the fledgling Hebrew Bible through its intertextual allusions, the author of Psalm 1 teaches his audience that the ‘torah of Yahweh’ comes in various forms, but all strands of it serve the same purpose – to communicate what a relationship with Yahweh entails and how one can live life happily and be successful. Psalm 1 uses only one word, torah, to refer to the various strands of Yahweh’s teaching, but Psalms 19 and 119 use various descriptions and continue to connect the various parts of the Hebrew Bible in a highly ingenious, creative and interpretative way.

PSALM 19

The Pentateuch takes up a more prominent role in Psalm 19. The beginning of the psalm reflects the creation narrative of Genesis 1 with its reference to the heavens and the ‘vault’ (רקיע, Gn1 passim; Ps 19:2, Ps 150:1). Consider the following:

The heavens declare the glory of God, the vault of heaven proclaims the work of his hands.

(Ps 19:2)

The only texts where ‘heaven’ and ‘vault’ occur together are in Genesis 1:14, 15, 17 and 20 and in Psalm 19:2. We could therefore be pardoned if we understand this verse as an allusion to the first creation story. But the description of the majestic beauty of the firmament and of the succession of days and nights (also reminiscent of Gn1) which communicates knowledge between them (Ps 19:3), also seems to reflect Psalm 96:2–3:

The heavens declare (מספרים) the glory (כבוד) of God, the vault of heaven proclaims (מגיד) the work of his hands. Day after day (מיס־ליום) pours out (יביע) a message, night after night proclaims (יחזה) knowledge.

(Ps 19:2–3)

Sing to Yahweh, praise his name! Proclaim (בשרו) his salvation day after day (מיס־ליום), declare (ספרו) his glory (כבודו) among the nations, his marvels among all peoples!

(Ps 96:2–3)

What Israel is called to do in Psalm 96, namely to declare the glory of Yahweh from day to day amongst the nations, the heavens and the firmament accomplish all on their own and they do this silently. What is more, they do not stop at the end of the workday; they do this work even better in the dark when the work of Yahweh’s hands (and thus his glory) is even more clearly visible. Other

contexts from the Hebrew Bible which come to mind are Psalm 8:2–4 and Isaiah 6:3 (as suggested by Van der Ploeg 1973:136). In Psalm 8:2–4, one finds the motif of Yahweh's glory being visible over the *whole earth* (cf. Ps 19:5, בְּכָל־הָאָרֶץ) through the work of his *fingers* (cf. 'the work of his *hands*' in Ps 19:2) whilst Isaiah 6:3 speaks about the seraphs which proclaim that *the whole earth* is full of the *glory* of Yahweh. What the seraphs do by calling out loud (קָרָא וְזָמַר), creation itself does without speech (אֵין־דָּבָר). Intertextual connections are thus established simultaneously with several parts of the Hebrew Bible and this is not done in a haphazard way, but carefully planned in order to provide an interpretation of the Genesis narrative by reading it through the lens of other contexts. Mathys (1994:301) relates this verse of Psalm 19 also to the very similar Psalm 79:13. The effect is that, what heaven (and the whole of creation) do on its own, namely to proclaim the glory of Yahweh, Israel has to be urged to do. Creation serves as an example for humanity! The grandeur of creation serves as a silent witness to the glory of its creator. In the second half of Psalm 19, this silent proclamation of the sky finds a parallel in the scriptural 'teaching' (תּוֹרָה) of Yahweh which is equally perfect (Ps 19:8). As the sun, part of Yahweh's heavenly work of creation, extends its light and 'warmth' all over the world so that nothing can possibly be 'hidden' from it (נוֹסְתֵר, Ps 19:7), so the 'command' (מִצְוָה) of Yahweh 'enlightens' the eyes of humans (Ps 19:9) and his teaching reveals 'hidden' (נוֹסְתֵר) transgressions (Ps 19:13). In a certain sense, the authors of the Torah-psalms thus already established the notion of scripture being its own interpreter – with a little help from these scribes who composed them and made the intertextual connections between them and the literary heritage of Israel.

PSALM 33

Psalm 33 was composed in a way very similar to Psalms 1 and 19 and it also touches on some of the themes addressed in Psalm 19. Its 'anthological' composition or intertextual connections have been explored by a number of investigators. The most important contributions have come from Deissler (1957:225–233), Gahler (1998), Mathys (1994) and Witte (2002:522–541). The psalm was given a highly creative and very ingenious interpretative function, similar to what happens in Psalms 1 and 19, when its authors established a network of intertextual links between seemingly unrelated parts of the emerging Hebrew Bible. It replicates the form of a hymn, but in actual fact serves as an instrument of teaching doctrine. Like the Torah-psalms, it brings together elements from all parts of the Hebrew Bible and so creates a theology of the Hebrew Bible *in nuce* (Mathys 1994:225). As in Psalm 19, the creation of heaven and the heavenly bodies dominates the scene at the beginning of the theological section in verses 4–7. This impressive creative work of Yahweh is described as worthy of instilling awe in all inhabitants of earth (vv. 8–9).

As in Psalm 19, the author of Psalm 33 focuses on the 'work' of Yahweh in creation and establishes a link with the first creation narrative. Psalm 33:4 uses the description 'all his work' (כָּל־מַעֲשָׂוֹ), which probably also refers to his deeds of grace in the history of Israel whilst Psalm 19:2 refers to heaven or the firmament as 'the work of his hands' (מַעֲשֵׂה יָדָיו). The reference to the creation of *heaven(s)* and *their whole army* (Ps 33:6) undoubtedly reflects Genesis 2:1 where it is reported that 'thus *heaven* and earth were completed *with their whole army*'. But when the poet speaks about the 'waters of the sea (ים)' and the 'deep waters' (תְּהוֹמוֹת) in the following verse, saying 'he (Yahweh) piles up the water of the sea like a dike (בְּנִי)'; he puts the deep waters in storehouses' (Ps 33:7), he not only refers to the account of creation in Genesis 1:2 (where 'sea' and 'deep waters' are mentioned together), but also involves a completely different context. This is found in Exodus 15:8 where it says,

By the breath (רוּחַ) of your nose the water was dammed up, the streams stood like a dike (בְּמוֹנֵי), the deep waters (תְּהוֹמוֹת) congealed in the heart of the sea (ים).

(Ex 15:8)

That the author of Psalm 33 had Exodus 15 and Joshua 3 in mind seems clear from the use of נָד in Exodus 15:8, Joshua 3:13 and 16 (cf. Witte 2002:527). Psalm 78:13 refers to both incidents with the same word. The first context is the song of Moses about the passage through the Sea of Reeds. This redemptive incident in the history of Israel is thus interpreted in Psalm 33:7 in terms of creation and cosmology, establishing a link between Yahweh's creative power and his power to save his people. That this is not a mistaken identification, is corroborated by the fact that Exodus 15 proceeds to describe the fear (Ex 15:15–16) that took hold of other nations (עַמִּים) because of this intervention of Yahweh on behalf of his people – the inhabitants of Philistia, the Edomites, Moabites and the inhabitants of Canaan (יְשֵׁבֵי כְנָעַן). After this ambiguous description of the creative and redemptive acts of Yahweh in Psalm 33:6–7, there is a jussive command addressed at 'the whole earth' and 'all the inhabitants of the world (כָּל־יְשֵׁבֵי תֵבֵל) to fear (יִרָא) Yahweh and to stand in awe (גִּוֵר) of him. The description of this respect and awe in Psalm 33:8 does not match that of the nations in Ex 15:15–16 precisely, but the motif is definitely the same – the stem of the verb 'to fear' (יִרָא) which is used in Psalm 33:8 appears as a *Niph'al* participle (נִרְאָה) in Exodus 15:11. In Joshua 4:24, with reference to the crossing of the Jordan, it is the Israelites who will fear (יִרָא) Yahweh when they remember this and 'all the peoples of the earth' (כָּל־עַמֵי הָאָרֶץ) will know that Yahweh's hand is strong.

Psalm 33:6 says that 'by the word of Yahweh heaven was made and through the breath (רוּחַ) of his mouth their whole army'. The 'breath of his mouth' in verse 6b seems to be simply a poetic parallel of 'the word of Yahweh' in verse 6a. Its use could have been suggested by the remark in Genesis 1:2 that the 'wind' (רוּחַ) of Yahweh 'hovered' over the waters, but it is significant that the destruction of the Egyptian army occurred, according to Exodus 15:10, when Yahweh 'blew' over the 'waters' of the Reed Sea with his 'breath' (רוּחַ). Exodus 15:8 describes this as happening through 'the breath (רוּחַ) of your nose', but Psalm 33:6 refers to 'the breath of his *mouth*'. This is a shift in perspective, because it is implied that Yahweh's *word* was responsible for the passage through the Sea of Reeds. The history of redemption of Israel from Egypt is thus interpretatively intertwined with the report about creation and both are described as a *deed* of Yahweh which he performed through his *word*.

In Psalm 106, where the passage through the Sea of Reeds is also explicated, the sea is *inter alia* described with the noun תְּהוֹמוֹת (Ps 106:9); Yahweh is said to have 'rebuked' the sea (וַיַּעַר) and the reaction of the Israelites after being saved from their enemies is described as having 'believed' (הוֹ אֱמוּנָה) his 'words' (דְּבָרָיו) (Ps 106:12). As is the case in Psalm 33, the focus in retelling the history of salvation from Egypt is on the 'faithful love' of Yahweh and the deliverance at the Sea of Reeds is the founding event of the salvation of Israel; see in this regard also the description of Gärtner (2010:479–488).

This connection between the report on creation and the redemption at the Sea of Reeds is also hinted at in verse 9, where the motivation is given why 'all the inhabitants of the world' should fear Yahweh. It says, 'For he spoke and it came into being, he commanded and there it stood'. The first half of the parallel definitely reflects Genesis 1, because the words 'he said' and 'and it came into being' form a refrain in the first narrative of creation (it occurs five times in Genesis 1). The second half of the parallel in Psalm 33:9b, however, does not only confirm the fact that Yahweh created by giving a command, it also reminds the knowledgeable reader of Exodus 15:8, where it says, 'the streams remained *standing* like a dike'. The *Niph'al* of נָצַב is used in this verse to express the idea 'to remain standing', but in Joshua 3:13 and 16, the damming up of the Jordan is described as 'the water will remain *standing* as one wall' (וַיַּעֲמֵד נָד אֶחָד). The polyvalence of עָמַד is thus used to intertwine the creation narrative and the entrance into Canaan, whilst it also hints at the miracle of salvation at the Sea of Reeds. All three texts are presented together as proof of the creative power of the word of Yahweh.

Further hints that Psalm 33 views the exodus from Egypt through the lens of Yahweh’s power at creation are to be found in the references to the ineffectiveness of a large *army* (חיל) to save a king (Ps 33:16); or of the power of a *horse* (סוס) to be of any help (Ps 33:17) when this is compared with the report that Yahweh hurled the *horse* (סוס) of Pharaoh (Ex 15:9), as well as his chariots and his *army* (חיל) into the sea (Ex 15:4). The ineffectiveness of military power is a typical topos of the Hebrew Bible, but its presence in this context is related directly to the context of Exodus 15 through the clever use of keywords. In addition to this, the reference to Israel as the *inheritance* of Yahweh (נחלה לו) in Psalm 33:12 also forms a parallel with the use of ‘the mountain of your *inheritance*’ (נחלתך) as a reference to Jerusalem in Exodus 15:17. Finally, there is a parallel between the reference to the temple in Jerusalem as ‘the *place* of your *residence*’ (מכון לשבתך) Exodus 15:17) and Yahweh’s abode in heaven as the ‘*place* of his *residence*’ (מכון־שבתו) Psalm 33:14).

From this list of similarities it is possible to deduce that the author of Psalm 33 is commenting on Exodus 15. He is stating that the redemption of Israel at the Sea of Reeds was effected through the ‘word’ of Yahweh; it was a cosmic happening, confirming Yahweh’s creative power; and it confirmed the adage that military power is of no use against the power of Yahweh. All of this serves as proof that Yahweh’s ‘faithful love’ (חסד) was the guiding principle in his saving of Israel (Ex 15:15, cf. Ps 33:5, 22). It proves that the earth is full of his ‘faithful love’ (חסד, Ps 33:5). But the psalm does not only explain the meaning of Exodus 15, a shift in perspective can also be perceived. According to Exodus 15, the purpose of Yahweh’s action at the Sea of Reeds was to demonstrate his incomparable power and ultimately to lead his people through his power to the sanctuary he has prepared for himself, the mountain-country of his inheritance (Ex 15:13, 17). In Psalm 33, Jerusalem no longer dominates the scene. The central perspective is one in which Yahweh’s abode is in heaven, from where he has a universal perspective on all humanity (Ps 33:14). Yahweh no longer dwells (מכון לשבתך) in a sanctuary (מקדש) on a mountain (הר) (Ex 15:17); he dwells (מכון שבתו) in heaven (שמים) Psalm 33:13. His inheritance is not the mountain country (הר נחלתך Ex 15:17), it is a certain people who is not identified explicitly, but nevertheless implied to be Israel (לו) (Ps 33:12) – if one knows the history of salvation.

Beate Ego (1998:556–569) investigated the change in perspective about Yahweh’s place of residence and presence from pre-exilic to post-exilic times. According to her, there was a reaction against representations of Yahweh’s earthly presence that were deemed too concrete. Ezekiel therefore describes his ‘glory’ as being able to vacate the temple temporarily; in Solomon’s prayer in 1 Kings 8:22–61, God is described as being enthroned in heaven and the temple becomes the place to which prayers are directed, not where Yahweh takes up permanent residence. Psalm 102:20 contains a description which comes very close to

that of Psalm 33:13–14. In both texts, Yahweh’s looking down from heaven is closely associated with his universal reign. What is also interesting is that Yahweh’s elevation to heaven is increasingly associated contrapuntal with a close involvement with his people, especially the lowly and needy, in the post-exilic period. Ego (1998:568) refers to Psalms 102:20–21, 113:4–8 (strongly reminiscent also of 1 Sm 2:8); Isaiah 57:15 and 66:1–2 in this regard.

The similarities between Psalm 33 and Exodus 15 are not coincidental or arbitrary, but carefully planned. The literary unit in Exodus 15:1–19 was itself probably composed and inserted into the text of Exodus in the post-exilic period to help with the interpretation of the event of the exodus for the post-exilic community. Mathys (1994:177) refers to the divergent opinions on the date and literary unity of Ex 15:1–19. But the symmetric structure of the hymn probably goes a long way to prove its composition by one author, whilst the description of the purpose and culmination of Yahweh’s intervention to save his people, namely worship in the temple in Jerusalem, points to a post-exilic date (cf. also Zenger [1981:456–458]). The purpose of establishing these links between Psalm 33 and Exodus 15 would have been to focus on the ‘intelligent plan’ and power of Yahweh in creation, which extends to the redemption of his people. As Jacobson (2008:119) puts it, ‘Creation by the upright word of God also insures an intelligible world permeated and ordered by Yahweh’s justice and compassion’.

The powerful creator God, who produced heaven and earth by speaking a *word*, by using the *breath* of his *mouth*, is also the powerful saviour God who saved his people by blowing/speaking (wind/breath) through his *mouth*. A parallel is formed between his word and his breath/spirit and between his work of creation and redemption. The interface between Yahweh and creation thus consists of his ‘word’ (דבר) which established his ‘work’ (מעשה; see the parallel between ‘word’ and ‘work’ in Ps 33:4). He spoke (אמר) and it was, he commanded (צוה) and it stood (Ps 33:9), whilst his counsel (עצה) and thoughts (מחשבת) similarly last (again עמד) for ever (Ps 33:11). His counsel includes the election of a certain people as his inheritance, seeing that this fact is mentioned in juxtaposition with the note about the effectiveness of his counsel and thoughts (Ps 33:12, following immediately after v. 11). It also qualifies his elevated perspective from heaven and the special attention he pays to those who show respect for him (Ps 33:18) to save their lives and preserve it in a time of famine (Ps 33:19). Yahweh’s speaking in the past is a guarantee of his knowledge about creation and its destination.

We end by focussing on the connections of Psalm 33 with one other context in the Pentateuch, namely Deuteronomy 32. We are concerned with the similarities between Deuteronomy 32:4 and Psalm 33:4–5:

TABLE 2
Similarities between Deuteronomy 32:4 and Psalm 33:4–5

Deuteronomy 32:4	Psalm 33:4–5
הַצּוֹר תִּמְּים פִּעֵלוּ כִּי כָל־דַּרְכָּיו מִשְׁפָּט אֵל אֱמוּנָה וְאֵין עוֹל צְדִיק וְיִשְׁרָ הוּא:	כִּי־יִשְׁרָ דְבַר־יְהוָה וְכָל־מַעֲשָׂיו בְּאֱמוּנָה: אֱהַב צְדָקָה וּמִשְׁפָּט תִּסֵּד יְהוָה מִלְּאֵה הָאָרֶץ:
The Rock – his work is perfect, for all his ways are just; a God of faithfulness and without injustice, just and right is he.	For the word of Yahweh is right and all his work with faithfulness. He loves righteousness and justice; the loyalty (faithfulness) of Yahweh fills the earth.

Deuteronomy 32 is difficult to understand in certain places, but the strong connection with wisdom-thinking seems to prove that, at least in its current form, it can be described as a wisdom-like speech about the fact that Israel has no basis to stand on should they wish to accuse Yahweh of disloyalty or unfaithfulness about what happened to them when they went into exile. The style and terminology of wisdom are evident in Deuteronomy 32:1–2. It reminds one of Proverbs 3:19–20 which uses language similar to Moses' introduction to his speech, speaking about the effect Yahweh's wisdom had on the breaking open of primordial floods and causing the clouds to drip dew. Proverbs 19:12 in turn compares the favour of a king with the effect of dew on grass in language reminiscent of Deuteronomy 32:1–2. Mathys (1994:168–169) also points out wisdom terminology in Deuteronomy 32:6, 15, 20 and 28.

Deuteronomy 32:4 then summarises a number of qualities of Yahweh in poetic form: His work is perfect, for all his actions (his 'ways') are just; he himself is a faithful God and has no injustice; he is 'just' and 'right'. Yahweh's 'work' and his actions therefore prove that he cannot be accused of any wrongdoing, such as the author implies in verse 6 that his people did. Deuteronomy 32:6b–14 describes, to prove these statements, the beneficial actions of Yahweh towards Israel.

Psalm 33:4–5 in turn forms a close parallel to this and uses four of the same or similar positive attributes to describe the work and actions of Yahweh (cf. also Gahler 1998:81). The focus is not on his actions with Israel, as the use of *פעל* and *דרך* in Deuteronomy 32:4 implies, but his acts of creation. That is why the description *כלי-מעשהו* is used in Psalm 33:4 instead. But his actions in creating the cosmos are just as full of faithfulness (*אמונה*) and justice (*צדק/צדקה*) and even loyalty (*חסד*), than his special care for Israel which is described in Deuteronomy 32. What is strikingly different in Psalm 33:4, however, is the fact that the word of Yahweh, *דבר יהוה*, is described as 'right', *ישר*, whilst this is said of Yahweh himself in Deuteronomy 32:4. That Yahweh is 'right' or 'upright' is also known from two psalms (25:8 and 92:16), the last of which forms a close parallel to Deuteronomy 32:4. The closest parallels to Psalm 33:4 are however to be found in Psalm 19:9, where it says that the 'precepts' or 'ordinances' (*פקודים*) of Yahweh are right and Psalm 119:137 which says 'you are just (*צדיק*), Yahweh and your judgements (*משפטים*) are right'. Psalm 33 in this pronouncement thus comes very close to two of the Torah-psalms, seeing as the 'word' of Yahweh also occurs in these two Torah-psalms as a synonymous term for the 'torah'.

In Psalm 147:15, the 'word' of Yahweh (*דבר*), again as an instrument of creation, is used parallel with his 'command' (*אמרה*). The *דבר*, *פקודים* and *אמרה* of Yahweh are in turn all used in the semantic field of Torah words in Psalm 119. In Psalm 147, two more Torah words are used in parallel to *דבר*, namely the *חקים* and *משפטים* of Yahweh which he 'revealed' to Jacob and Israel exactly as a sign of their election (cf. Ps 147:20). These words also share the status of *תורה* in Psalm 119. It is therefore no surprise that the elements of creation are said to 'obey' (*עשה*) the 'word' of Yahweh (Ps 148:8), or that the heavenly bodies and the water above the firmament 'did not transgress' (*לא-יעברו*) the 'decree' (*חק*) which Yahweh gave to them (Ps 148:6). The character of Psalm 144, which was obviously compiled from various elements borrowed from Psalms 8, 18, 104, 128, et cetera and also elements from Deuteronomy 4 and 33, simulates the style of wisdom psalms such as Psalms 1, 19, 25, 31, 33, 34, 37 and 119, locating it in the same context of origin as these psalms.

The question can be posed whether it is possible to know that Psalm 33:4–5 intentionally alludes to Deuteronomy 32:4. We cannot be sure, although the similarity between Deuteronomy 32:9 and Psalm 33:12 does suggest that this it is not impossible. Compare the following verses:

For Yahweh's portion is his people (עמו); Jacob is the allotment of his inheritance (נחלתו).

(Dt 32:9)

Blessed is the nation (הגוי) whose God is Yahweh, the people (העם) whom he has chosen for his own inheritance (לנחלה לו).

(Ps 33:12)

In Deuteronomy 32, this description of the election of Yahweh's people is used *in malam partem*, as it is a prerogative which they did not value and thus one of the reasons why Yahweh rejected them to bring them to their senses. Strangely, the intervention of Yahweh at the Sea of Reeds is not mentioned in Deuteronomy 32. But from a late post-exilic perspective, it seems, the author of Psalm 33 established a connection between creation, the election of Israel and their rescue at the Sea of Reeds and interpreted all of this as evidence of the faithfulness and justness of Yahweh. All these deeds of Yahweh the author of Psalm 33 included under the heading of 'the word of Yahweh' and 'the breath of his mouth'. Yahweh created through his word, but he also saved through his word. A similar kind of 'word-theology' is found in Psalm 147:15–20, where *דבר* is described as Yahweh's effective instrument of managing creation, but also his special directive for Israel, something which elevates Israel to a very unique position amongst the family of nations (cf. the same motif in Ps 33:12).

In his 'word' one can find the reports about his actions, his counsel, his knowledge and understanding and his thoughts. All of these serve his purposes with creation and with his people, those who wait for him and who trust in him. Even the exile forms part of his plan for his people and for the whole world.

CONCLUSION

In this article it was demonstrated that Psalm 33 closely resembles the Torah-psalms in terms of the influence it had undergone from wisdom perspectives and the intertextual connections it was given with all parts of an emerging Hebrew canon of scripture in the late Persian or early Hellenistic era. The purpose of its form and mode of composition, as well as the arrangement of the topics it addresses, was to provide the perspective to its audience that Yahweh revealed his power through his word of creation, but also his word of redemption in the history of his people. Those who acknowledge his power and who recognise him as their God thus have the privilege of sharing the perspective that he is in control of the cosmos and the vicissitudes of his people and would turn everything to the benefit of those who patiently wait for him and trust in him.

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