

**PSALM 33: A LITERARY, CONTEXTUAL AND THEOLOGICAL ANALYSIS**

**by**

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**A dissertation submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree**

**MTh (Old Testament Studies)**

**in**

**Old Testament Studies**

**at the**

**Faculty of Theology and Religion**

**UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA**

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**October 2018**

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## Table of Contents

<b>Declaration of originality</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Table of Contents</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Chapter 1: Introduction</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>1.1 Introduction</b>	<b>7</b>
1.1.1 Life setting	7
1.1.2 Central theme	7
1.1.3 Structure	7
1.1.4 Israel and the other nations	8
<b>1.2 Research problem</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>1.3 Aims and objectives</b>	<b>9</b>
1.3.1 Research problem	9
1.3.2 Literature review	9
1.3.3 Contextual analysis	9
1.3.4 Literary analysis	9
1.3.5 Detail analysis	10
1.3.6 Theology	10
1.3.7 Final Synthesis	10
<b>1.4 Methodology</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>1.5 Hypothesis</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>1.6 Chapter division</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>1.7 Terminology</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>1.8 Orthography</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>Chapter 2: Literature review</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>2.1 Introduction</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>2.2 Recent studies in the <i>Psalter</i></b>	<b>16</b>
<b>2.3 Structure of Psalm 33</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>2.4 Life setting</b>	<b>17</b>

	4
<b>2.5 Theological themes</b>	<b>18</b>
2.5.1 Creation and redemption	18
2.5.2 Redemption in Israelite history	19
2.5.3 Yahweh is sovereign over all nations	19
2.5.4 Covenant	20
2.5.5 New song	21
<b>2.6 Synthesis</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>Chapter 3: Contextual analysis</b>	<b>27</b>
<b>3.1 Introduction</b>	<b>27</b>
<b>3.2 Heading</b>	<b>27</b>
<b>3.3 Cultic and life settings</b>	<b>27</b>
<b>3.4 Date of Psalm 33</b>	<b>30</b>
<b>3.5 Psalm 33 as a possible Wisdom Psalm</b>	<b>31</b>
<b>3.6 Synthesis</b>	<b>34</b>
<b>Chapter 4: Literary analysis</b>	<b>38</b>
<b>4.1 Introduction</b>	<b>38</b>
<b>4.2 <i>Psalter</i> as connected narrative</b>	<b>38</b>
4.2.1 <i>Psalter</i> introduced by Psalms 1 and 2	38
4.2.2 <i>Psalter</i> concluding with Psalm 150	41
4.2.3 Five-book structure of the <i>Psalter</i>	42
Figure 1: doxologies as conclusions to books	43
4.2.4 Recent studies of the <i>Psalter</i>	44
4.2.5 Orientation-disorientation-reorientation scheme	46
<b>4.3 Text and translation</b>	<b>46</b>
<b>4.4 Form</b>	<b>48</b>
<b>4.5 Structure</b>	<b>49</b>
Figure 2: Suggested structure compared to views of scholars	50
Figure 3: Suggested structure	52
<b>4.6 Synthesis</b>	<b>53</b>

<b>Chapter 5: Detail analysis</b>	<b>57</b>
<b>5.1 Introduction</b>	<b>57</b>
<b>5.2 Instructions to praise Yahweh (stanza 1: Psalm 33:1-5)</b>	<b>57</b>
5.2.1 Response to Psalm 32	58
5.2.2 Righteous instructed to praise	59
5.2.3 Yahweh is righteous, faithful and just	61
5.2.4 Yahweh, God of Israel and the universe	62
5.2.5 New song	63
<b>5.3 Yahweh created and redeems (stanza 2: Psalm 33:6-9)</b>	<b>65</b>
<b>5.4 Yahweh is sovereign (stanza 3: Psalm 33:10-12)</b>	<b>70</b>
5.4.1 Plans of the people versus advice of Yahweh	71
5.4.2 Israel and the other nations	72
<b>5.5 Yahweh redeems (stanza 4: Psalm 33:13-19)</b>	<b>75</b>
5.5.1 Creator of all their hearts	75
5.5.2 Yahweh looks at the people	75
5.5.3 Redemption not by a king, hero or horse	78
5.5.4 Redemption in their history	79
<b>5.6 Hope in Yahweh (stanza 5: Psalm 33:20-22)</b>	<b>79</b>
5.6.1 Hope (יָחַל) in Yahweh	79
5.6.2 Grace (חַסֵּד) of Yahweh	80
<b>5.7 Synthesis</b>	<b>81</b>
<b>Chapter 6: Theology of Psalm 33</b>	<b>85</b>
<b>6.1 Introduction</b>	<b>85</b>
<b>6.2 Yahweh is sovereign over creation</b>	<b>86</b>
<b>6.3 Yahweh is sovereign over history</b>	<b>88</b>
6.3.1 Yahweh knows everything	88
6.3.2 Advice of Yahweh determines history	90
<b>6.4 Righteousness</b>	<b>92</b>
6.4.1 Righteousness as element of the covenant	92
6.4.2 Righteousness as dependence upon Yahweh	93

6.4.3 Righteous as the chosen	94
6.4.4 Righteousness as an ethical lifestyle	96
<b>6.5 Yahweh as faithful God</b>	<b>97</b>
<b>6.6 Redemption</b>	<b>99</b>
6.6.1 Inheritance of Yahweh	99
6.6.2 Redemption in the lifetime of Israel	101
6.6.3 Redemption of other nations	102
<b>6.7 Synthesis</b>	<b>104</b>
<b>Chapter 7: Final Synthesis</b>	<b>106</b>
<b>7.1 Introduction</b>	<b>106</b>
<b>7.2 Research problem</b>	<b>106</b>
<b>7.3 Hypothesis evaluated</b>	<b>106</b>
<b>7.4 Sovereignty of Yahweh displayed</b>	<b>107</b>
7.4.1 Structure emphasizes - Sovereignty of Yahweh	107
7.4.2 Creation, redemption and control over history	108
7.4.3 Yahweh chooses any nation as his people	110
<b>7.5 Synthesis</b>	<b>111</b>
<b>Bibliography</b>	<b>112</b>
<b>Annexure A: Translation, morphological analysis and text critical notes on Psalm 33</b>	<b>120</b>
<b>Annexure B: Words / semantic areas that are repeated in Psalm 33:</b>	<b>136</b>

## Chapter 1: Introduction

### 1.1 Introduction

The following are shortly discussed concerning Psalm 33: life setting, central theme, structure and Israel and the other nations.

#### 1.1.1 Life setting

Old Testament scholars have not been able to agree on the life setting of the psalm. Psalm 33 may be from the post-exilic period whereby Israel as a nation is motivated to hope in the redemptive acts of Yahweh (Botha & Potgieter 2010:1-7). The psalm may be from the Israelite monarchical period (Craigie 2004:271). Barton and Muddiman (2001:377) suggested that it is not possible to assign Psalm 33 to a specific historical setting.

#### 1.1.2 Central theme

Most scholars agree that the main theme of Psalm 33 is the establishment of a link between Yahweh's acts of creation and redemption (Botha & Potgieter 2010:7, cf. Craigie 2004:271, Kraus 1988:379). The deliverance of Yahweh's people happens in the history of the people, as he saves a person from death and hunger (Craigie 2004:275). Although the word 'covenant' does not appear in Psalm 33, it is presupposed by the descriptions of Yahweh as creator and saviour (Craigie 2004:275).

#### 1.1.3 Structure

Psalm 33 is not an acrostic psalm but it does have twenty two lines, the same as the number of the Hebrew alphabet (Terrien 2003:297). The twenty two alphabet letters are represented by the twenty two parallelisms in the poem (Botha 2014:107, cf. Terrien 2003:297). Scholars hold diverse views about the structure of the psalm, it has been divided from 2 to 6 stanzas (see Craigie 2004:271; Terrien 2003:295-297; Clifford 2002:169; Barton & Muddiman 2001:377; Weber 2001:149; Gahler 1998:33; Gerstenberger 1988:143-145; Kraus 1988:143-145).

### 1.1.4 Israel and the other nations

Yahweh's stance towards the people of the earth is not equal. He causes the downfall of some, and he maintains his chosen nation (Terrien 2003:298). The foreign nations and their kings in the Psalms are enemies of Israel and opposing forces to the kingship of Yahweh (Wittman 2014:67). Psalm 33 also exhibits this negative outlook when Yahweh destroys the plans of the nations (v. 10; Wittman 2014:56). Yahweh, who destroys the plans of the nations, is motivated by political resistance against the rule of foreign nations over Israel (Wittman 2014:66). According to Terrien (2003:299) Psalm 33 hints in the direction that the election of Israel as the people of Yahweh plays a role in the future of the other nations. The sovereignty of Yahweh over all the nations implies possible redemption for non-Israelites, for those who fear Yahweh (Terrien 2003:300). The grace (חַסֵּד) of Yahweh is the motive for his redemption (Kraus 1988:375). *Grace* is a quality of the God of the covenant, but in verse 5 God's grace is extended to all the people of the earth (Terrien 2003:298).

### 1.2 Research problem

In Psalm 33:3 the readers are instructed to sing a 'new song' to Yahweh. Scholars do not agree about the meaning of a 'new song'. Possible interpretations for a 'new song' are:

- The renewal of the covenant (Barton & Muddiman 2001:377).
- The New Year festival in which the new creation is celebrated (Craigie 2004:272).
- The praises of Yahweh that is always new (Clifford 2002:170).
- Yahweh will do something new to save his people (Gerstenberger 1988:145). This redemption may be in the lifetime of his people (Kraus 1988:375 and 379), or it may be in eschatological times when the kingdom of God will come (Terrien 2003:298).

The problem to be researched is thus to investigate the meaning of a 'new song' that has to be sung. Recent scholarly views will be studied. A suggestion as to the meaning of a 'new song' will be given by this study, as it is interpreted in the context

of Psalm 33 and the rest of the *Psalter*. The meaning of the 'new song' will be considered in terms of literary, contextual and theological analysis of Psalm 33.

### **1.3 Aims and objectives**

The aims and objectives of this study includes the following: Research problem; literature review; contextual analysis; literary and rhetorical analysis; detail analysis; theology; and the final synthesis.

#### **1.3.1 Research problem**

In a preliminary literature review problems are mentioned as pointed out by recent scholars. The research problem entails the meaning of the 'new song' in Psalm 33:3, where the people are instructed to sing a 'new song' for Yahweh. Exegetical methods are identified to approach this problem. My hypothesis will then be tested in accordance with the results of this study.

#### **1.3.2 Literature review**

A literature review is conducted by focusing on various problems that contemporary scholars identified in Psalm 33. It is done in terms of: Life setting; central theme; structure of the psalm; and Israel's relation to other nations.

#### **1.3.3 Contextual analysis**

The text is studied diachronically, whereby the following are kept in mind: the text developed over time and changes may have been made to it; the reason(s) why changes were affected (if so); the circumstances under which the text was developed; and the community / communities for whom it was written. The contextual analysis is done in terms of the following: questioning the lack of a heading for the psalm; its cultic setting; its date; and the possibility that it is a wisdom psalm.

#### **1.3.4 Literary analysis**

The text is studied synchronically, whereby it is considered in the shape as we have it today. Recent studies of the *Psalter* suggest that a psalm must be considered in the context of the rest of the *Psalter*, therefore Psalm 33 is studied in relation to: the five-book structure of the *Psalter*; introductory psalms (Pss. 1-2) and Psalm 150 as

conclusion to the *Psalter*, and the orientation-disorientation-reorientation scheme, that categorises most of the psalms. A structure for Psalm 33 is suggested by this study, by taking into account the rhetorical objectives of the psalm.

### **1.3.5 Detail analysis**

The detail analysis of Psalm 33 is conducted in terms of the structure of the psalm suggested in this study. Recent scholarly works and the Hebrew text are consulted, as this study presents its understanding of the claims made by the author(s).

### **1.3.6 Theology**

The theological themes of Psalm 33 are identified in the context of the *Psalter*. They are discussed in view of both the text of Psalm 33 and the *Psalter* as a whole.

### **1.3.7 Final Synthesis**

Lastly, the findings of the study are discussed. Contributions of this study to the field of the theology of the Book of Psalms are exposed in this final chapter.

## **1.4 Methodology**

There is not a 'blueprint' for the methodology of analysing the texts of the Bible. Therefore the exegete is at liberty to use different methods and approaches (Human 1999:361). Authors of biblical methodologies define various exegetical approaches differently (Steck 1995:101). Thus the exegetical methods used in this study will first be defined.

Exegesis is defined as the contextual, literary and theological analysis of a biblical text (Gorman 2001:8). Contextual analysis is also referred to as historical analysis. The purpose of exegesis is to understand the text within its own historical and literary contexts (Hayes & Holladay 2007:53-54).

Hayes and Holladay (2007:77-78) suggest that the primary source be studied first by the exegete in order to keep the study original. By doing so the exegete can formulate his / her own hypothesis and interpretation of the text (Hayes & Holladay 2007:77-78). After studying the primary source the exegete engages with scholarship by consulting secondary sources to test his analysis (Hayes & Holladay

2007:77-78). The study of the primary source text is attached as annexure in this dissertation.

A comprehensive literary and contextual analysis is done on Psalm 33. This analysis includes the historical context, literary context and detailed analysis of the text. Here follows a short description of these aspects:

Historical analysis of the text studies the life situation (*sitz im leben*) in which the text was written (Hayes & Holladay 2007:53-54, cf. Gorman 2001:9). The historical analysis is known as the diachronic approach to the text (Osborne 2008:22, cf. Gorman 2001:15). In historical analysis the following questions are asked: Who is the community behind the text? Under which circumstances did the text develop? (Gorman 2001:68-69). Diachronic studies consider if there were changes made to the text and if a text can be reconstructed that is older than the received text. The exegete should decide, depending on the results, if he / she will take the text in its present form or in an earlier form. At least in a diachronic way, the exegete will have to consider why certain additions were made to the text.

Literary analysis dissects the text as we have it today (Hayes & Holladay 2007:25-26, cf. Gorman 2001:9). Literary analysis is known as the synchronic approach to the text (Osborne 2008:22, cf. Gorman 2001:12). The larger context of the text is studied where it occurs in the book and its contribution to the meaning of the book (Gorman 2001:70). The received Hebrew text of Psalm 33 is thus exposed.

Detail analysis of the text is the most important aspect of exegesis (Gorman 2001:91). Recent commentaries and exegetical studies are consulted as they study the text in its different contexts (Gorman 2001:92-93). Intertextual analysis also forms part of this detail analysis (Gorman 2001:109). Detail analysis is divided into sections that correspond with the structure of the text (Gorman 2001:93). While the whole text is considered, the researcher will record and discuss only those features in the psalm that are applicable to his research or research problem (Gorman 2001:93).

Lastly, the *theological analysis* identifies the theological claims that the text makes (Gorman 2001:9). These themes are identified and discussed in the dissertation.

### **1.5 Hypothesis**

Throughout this study, my hypothesis is that the 'new song' that has to be sung is an anticipation of a new saving act that Israel expects of Yahweh. In Psalm 33 they remember what Yahweh has done for them during the *exodus* event, by placing the *exodus* event in parallel with the acts of creation. Israel, as a post-exilic community believes that Yahweh will redeem them again, as he did in the past. The grace of Yahweh is extended to other nations than Israel, to redeem them too.

### **1.6 Chapter division**

Chapter one: Introduction and overview of the issues that characterise the study. Chapter one spells out features such as: the research problem that necessitated the undertaking of the research; aims and objectives; methodology; hypothesis; and summary of the chapter divisions.

Chapter two: Literature review focusing on various problems that contemporary scholars identified in Psalm 33. The recent views of scholars will also be pointed out concerning the research problem: meaning of 'new song' (Ps. 33:3).

Chapter three: Contextual analysis, whereby the text of Psalm 33 is studied diachronically.

Chapter four: Literary analysis, whereby the text of Psalm 33 is studied synchronically.

Chapter five: Detail analysis of the text of Psalm 33 is studied in terms of the structure suggested by this study.

Chapter six: Theological analysis of Psalm 33. Theological themes of Psalm 33 are identified and studied in the context of the *Psalter*.

Chapter seven: The final synthesis summarises the conclusions made by this study, and contributions made to the field of theology.

### **1.7 Terminology**

The following terms are described for this study:

**Acrostic structure:** A poem has an acrostic structure when the first word of every line begins with the consecutive letter of the Hebrew alphabet.

**BCE:** Before Common Era.

**Concentric structure:** A poem has a concentric structure if the first stanza and the last stanzas are related to one another. The main theme is then situated in the stanza in the middle.

**Contextual analysis:** Also known as historical analysis. The text is studied diachronically, whereby it is considered that the text developed over time, to address various communities in their life situations. Changes could have been made to the text over this period of time.

**Covenant:** Is a metaphor that describes the relationship between God and Israel (Bromiley 1979:791).

**Cultic setting:** Religious liturgy, ceremony or ritual, which is followed to worship God.

**Diachronic exegesis:** Takes into consideration that the text of the Bible was developed and edited over many years and by various editors (Browning 2010). Form criticism and redaction criticism are used in this approach (Browning 2010). As opposed to synchronic exegesis.

**Inclusio:** A literary style figure that applies a concentric structure to a text by framing similar words at the beginning and end of a section.

Literary analysis: The text is studied synchronically, as we have it today, and considering its context in the *Psalter*. The rhetorical objectives of a psalm is discovered in this process, whereby the author's arguments, claims and purpose are identified.

Merism: The combination of two contrasting words which refers to an entirety.

Metaphor: A figure of speech in which a quality is given to a person or object that usually describes another.

Monotheism: Doctrine that states that there is only one God.

Synchronic exegesis: The biblical text is studied as it exists now, and interpreted by the reader (Browning 2010). As opposed to diachronic exegesis.

Tehillah: Hebrew for a hymn of praise.

Theological analysis: The theological elements of the Biblical text are studied.

Torah: Hebrew word for law.

Sitz im leben: German for 'life setting'.

## **1.8 Orthography**

This study adopted the adjusted Harvard system (University of Pretoria) to give reference to works consulted.

Annexure A consists of the morphological analysis of Psalm 33, and a translation of Psalm 33 is suggested by this study in section 4.3. References to the text of Psalm 33 in this study are from the mentioned translation.

This study uses the abbreviations of biblical books according to the English Standard Version:

<u>Book name</u>	<u>Abbreviation</u>	<u>Book name</u>	<u>Abbreviation</u>
Genesis	Gen.	Song of Solomon	Song
Exodus	Ex.	Isaiah	Isa.
Leviticus	Lev.	Jeremiah	Jer.
Numbers	Num.	Lamentations	Lam.
Deuteronomy	Deut.	Ezekiel	Ezek.
Joshua	Josh.	Daniel	Dan.
Judges	Judg.	Hosea	Hos.
Ruth	Ruth	Joel	Joel
1-2 Samuel	1-2 Sam.	Amos	Amos
1-2 Kings	1-2 Kings	Obadiah	Obad.
1-2 Chronicles	1-2 Chron.	Jonah	Jonah
Ezra	Ezra	Micah	Mic.
Nehemiah	Neh.	Nahum	Nah.
Esther	Est.	Habakkuk	Hab.
Job	Job	Zephaniah	Zeph.
Psalms	Ps.	Haggai	Hag.
Proverbs	Prov.	Zechariah	Zech.
Ecclesiastes	Eccles.	Malachi	Mal.

## Chapter 2: Literature review

### 2.1 Introduction

This literature review focuses on the following aspects of Psalm 33: recent studies of the *Psalter*, its structure, life setting, and central theme, themes like redemption, creation, and 'new song' (שִׁיר הַדָּשָׁן). The meaning of a 'new song' is identified as research problem in this study, because there are little or no scholarly agreement. The diverse views of scholars on the possible meaning of a 'new song' are mentioned later in this chapter.

### 2.2 Recent studies in the *Psalter*

Recent studies on the Psalms are about the composition, editorial unity, and the meaning of the Psalms in general (Balentine 2015:216). Hereby the complexity of the Psalms is highlighted where opposing elements are mentioned in the same context (Balentine 2015:216). Details of various theological themes contradict themselves throughout the Psalms (Gericke 2014:44). One such example is the different descriptions of creation as found in Psalms 8:1-8, 33:6, 74:13-14 and 104:24-26 (Gericke 2014:44). This will be evaluated in the dissertation.

### 2.3 Structure of Psalm 33

Only three Psalms in the first book are not attributed to David in their headings, namely Psalms 1, 2, and 33 (Bullock 2001:26). Psalm 33 has no introductory formula, like the other Psalms (Terrien 2003:297; cf. Barton & Muddiman 2001:377). Psalm 33 is described as a *tehillah*, a hymn of praise in its heading (Briggs & Briggs 1969:284). The structures of Psalms 32 and 33 indicate that they are two separate poems (Barton & Muddiman 2001:377, cf. Allen et al. 1971:235). Psalm 33 is a reply to the instruction of the last verse of Psalm 32 for the righteous to shout with joy (Brueggemann & Bellinger 2014:164).

As previously mentioned, Psalm 33 is not an acrostic psalm. However, it has twenty two lines, the same as the number of the Hebrew alphabet (Craigie 2004:271, cf. Terrien 2003:297). Clifford (2002:169) agrees with this, but he calls it a type of an acrostic psalm, because the psalm has 22 lines, but the first letter of a line does not

begin with the relevant alphabetical letter. The extensive use of the number of letters in the Hebrew alphabet emphasises the extensiveness of the sovereignty of Yahweh over all the earth (Keck et al. 1996:809; cf. Mays 1994:148-149). The twenty two alphabet letters are represented by the twenty two parallelisms in the poem (Botha 2014:107, cf. Terrien 2003:297).

Clifford (2002:169) divides Psalm 33 into two stanzas (vv. 1-11; 12-22), the first stanza has eighty Hebrew words and the second has eighty one Hebrew words. Some scholars divide the psalm into three stanzas, the introduction (vv. 1-3), body (vv. 4-19), and the conclusion of the poem (vv. 20-22; see Craigie 2004:271, cf. Barton & Muddiman 2001:377, Gahler 1998:33). Terrien (2003:295-297) divides it into an introduction (vv. 1-3), conclusion (vv. 20-22) and four stanzas (vv. 4-7; 8-11; 12-15; 16-19). Other scholars divide the psalm into five stanzas (vv. 1-3; 4-7; 8-11; 12-15; 16-18; and conclusion 19-22; Weber 2001:149, cf. Gerstenberger 1988:143-145), while Kraus (1988:375-378) divides it into 6 stanzas (vv. 1-3; 4-9; 10-12; 13-15; 16-19; 20-22). This study suggests a structure for Psalm 33 in paragraph 4.5.

## **2.4 Life setting**

Psalm 33 may be dated in the post-exilic period whereby Israel as a nation was motivated to have hope in the redemptive acts of Yahweh (Botha & Potgieter 2010:1-7; Gerstenberger 1988:145-146). Craigie (2004:271) dismisses the possibility that Psalm 33 may be from the post-exilic period, but suggests the probability of the Israelite monarchical period. Terrien (2003:300) suggests that the psalm may be from the time of David's kingdom after the battle of Megiddo. The psalm also has late Aramaic linguistic attributes, and could thus belong to the late Greek period too (Briggs & Briggs 1969:286).

Studies also suggest that the psalm cannot be assigned to a specific historical setting (Barton & Muddiman 2001:377; Kraus 1988:375; Allen et al. 1971:235). Psalm 33 may be a hymn of praise (Craigie 2004:270; Gerstenberger 1988:145; Kraus 1988:374), or a hymn of appeal to Yahweh to do something new, while Israel waits on Yahweh's redemption (Gerstenberger 1988:145). The poem may also be from a context of cultic devotion before Yahweh (Kraus 1988:375).

For Botha and Potgieter (2010:5) Psalm 33 appears to be a hymn, and a poem used to teach doctrine. They suggest that Psalm 33 is related to the Torah Psalms (Botha & Potgieter 2010:7). This connection is made because the *Torah of Yahweh* in the Torah Psalms (Pss. 19 and 119) is regarded as equivalent to the *word of Yahweh*, which is found in Psalm 33 (Botha & Potgieter 2010:1). According to Gerstenberger (1988:20, 144-146) Wisdom Psalms (and Ps. 33) were not exclusively used for educational purposes, but also as liturgical documents.

## **2.5 Theological themes**

The central statement of the psalm is in verse 5, where it is stated that the earth is full of the grace of Yahweh (Mays 1994:149). The rest of the psalm is an explanation of this statement, namely that the earth is full of the grace of Yahweh (Mays 1994:149). The focus of praise is the character, actions, and sovereignty of Yahweh (Brueggemann & Bellinger 2014:164). The following theological themes are identified in the psalm:

### **2.5.1 Creation and redemption**

The psalm establishes a connection between Yahweh's acts of creation and his acts of redeeming Israel (Botha & Potgieter 2010:1). The reference to *Israel* does not appear in the psalm, but it is alluded to by various statements that are reconcilable with the history of Israel (see Botha & Potgieter 2010:5-6).

The *Psalter* refers to Yahweh's acts of creation to describe his power (Tucker 2008:591). They celebrate Yahweh's acts of creation in anticipation of future redemption. Creation plays an important role to describe Yahweh as sovereign over all the earth (Tucker 2008:591).

The *exodus* event is the paradigm for redemption of many texts in the Old Testament, and also in the *Psalter* (Sakenfeld 2009:46-47). The aim of the *exodus* is for the people of Israel to move ahead and thrive on their own land (Sakenfeld 2009:47). Reference to the *exodus* includes thus a promise to provide for the people in need and anticipation to own land (Sakenfeld 2009:47).

Yahweh is described as creator and saviour in Psalm 33 (Clifford 2002:170). The roles of Yahweh become evident in the application of his *word* (Botha & Potgieter 2010:7). Yahweh created by his word, and he redeems his people through his word (Botha & Potgieter 2010:5, 7). The phrase “*because he said and it happened*” of Psalm 33:9a refers to the first creation narrative (Gen. 1:6; Brueggemann & Bellinger 2014:166). This statement occurs five times as a refrain in the first creation narrative (Botha & Potgieter 2010:5).

A link is established in the psalm between Yahweh's acts of creation and his acts of redemption, by bringing all the interactions that he had with water together (Botha & Potgieter 2010:5-6). The way how *Yahweh gathers the waters of the sea like the dam* and how *he puts the deeps of the sea in storehouses* as creation process refers to the creation narrative (Gen. 1:2), *exodus* (Ex. 15:8), and entrance into Canaan (Josh. 3:13; Lohfink & Zenger 2000:92).

### **2.5.2 Redemption in Israelite history**

The people who acknowledge Yahweh's lordship, wait for him and they, who put their trust in him, will benefit by the fact that he has control over their hardship (Botha & Potgieter 2010:7). God's word of redemption is expected in the psalm to have materialised in the history of his people (Terrien 2003:297). Yahweh saves a living person from death and hunger (Ps. 33:19; Craigie 2004:275). There are also scholars who are convinced that this redemption will realise only in eschatological times (Keck et al. 1996:811).

### **2.5.3 Yahweh is sovereign over all nations**

Yahweh's stance towards the people of the earth is not equal. He causes the downfall of some nations, while he maintains Israel (Ps. 33:10, 12; Terrien 2003:298). The foreign nations and their kings in the Psalms are enemies of Israel and opposing forces to the kingship of Yahweh (Wittman 2014:67). Psalm 33:10 exhibits this negative outlook when Yahweh destroys the plans of the nations (Wittman 2014:56). The assertion of the kingship of Yahweh is one of the most important aspects of the theology of the Psalms, and is motivated by political resistance against the rule of foreign nations over Israel (Wittman 2014:66). For

Yahweh to destroy the plans of the nations is confirmation that the world is governed by him and not by people (Clifford 2002:170-171).

Yahweh chose Israel to be his people, and because of this they are regarded as righteous and upright (Ps. 33:1; see Clifford 2002:170). They are called so because of the acts of Yahweh, and not because of their own deeds (Clifford 2002:170). According to Terrien (2003:299) Psalm 33 hints in the direction that the election of Israel as the people of Yahweh plays a role in the future of the other nations. The sovereignty of Yahweh over all nations implies possible redemption for non-Jews, for those who fear Yahweh (Terrien 2003:300).

#### **2.5.4 Covenant**

The core of the Hebrew religion is situated in the covenant (Craigie 2004:275). The word *covenant* does not appear in Psalm 33, but it is presupposed. Psalm 33 portrays the roles of Yahweh as creator and sovereign over human history as it is understood to be in the covenant (Craigie 2004:275). The covenant formula that is usually used to describe the relationship between Yahweh and Israel is (Jer. 7:23; Lohfink & Zenger 2000:85):

*I will be your God,  
and you will be my people.*

This covenant formula focuses on Yahweh as the actant in the relationship (Lohfink & Zenger 2000:85). This is a statement made in two parts and is made from the perspective of Yahweh. It does not focus on Israel's responsibility towards the Torah, that resulted from the covenant (Lohfink & Zenger 2000:85). The covenant formula of Psalm 33:12 is different (Lohfink & Zenger 2000:107):

*Blessed is the nation whose God is Yahweh,  
the people he elected for his inheritance.*

This covenant formula is described from the perspective of the nation, and not from the perspective of Yahweh (Lohfink & Zenger 2000:108). Yahweh is still the actant, and the nation still the object of the covenant (Lohfink & Zenger 2000:108). The

author only emphasises the group of people with whom the covenant is made, by the inverse placement of the *nation* (גוֹי) in the beginning of the statement (Lohfink & Zenger 2000:108). Therefore the covenant is not only associated with Israel, but also with all the other nations (Lohfink & Zenger 2000:108). The reason for this alternative covenant formula is that the covenant is interpreted from a different life situation (Balentine 2015:216). Israel's horizon is broadened to consider the international community. Israel was exposed to life situations like the fall of Israelite monarchy, Babylonian exile, and destruction and rebuilding of the temple (Balentine 2015:216-217). Israel interpreted the covenant from these life experiences, that Yahweh may also choose other people as his inheritance (Balentine 2015:216-217).

### 2.5.5 New song

In Psalm 33:3 the people are instructed to sing a 'new song'. Scholars have different views about the meaning of the 'new song'. Here is a list of possible meanings:

- The instruction in verse 3 to sing a 'new song' is a reference to the widening of the scope of Yahweh's grace to the other nations (Lohfink & Zenger 2000:113). The expression to sing a 'new song' was first used in the context of the return from Babylon in Isaiah 42:10. Here it refers to the new message of Yahweh's interest to redeem other nations as well (Lohfink & Zenger 2000:113). Other references, where this expression is used are in Psalms 40:3, 96:1, 98:1, 144:9, and 149:1 (Patterson 2007:416). In Psalms 144:9 and 149:1 the 'new song' is used in the context of all the nations of the earth, and it is parallel with *tehillah* (Lohfink & Zenger 2000:113-114). In Psalms 96:1 and 98:1 the 'new song' is used in the context, where Israel's relationship with the other nations is reconsidered (Lohfink & Zenger 2000:113-114).
- The 'new song' may be an attempt to reform the sacrificial cult (Brown 2014:207). Yahweh did not want sacrifices, but only a hymn of praise. A hymn of praise was the new interpretation of bringing sacrifice to Yahweh (Brown 2014:207).
- The 'new song' may probably be the renewal of the covenant, the new year festival in which the new creation is celebrated, or the praises of Yahweh which are sung (Barton & Muddiman 2001:377).

- The 'new song' refers to the new covenant that Jeremiah 31:31-33 refers to (Terrien 2003:51).
- Craigie (2004:272) compares the 'new song' in Psalm 33:3 with Psalms 96:1, 98:1 and 149:1. According to him it is normally used in the Psalms as an introductory formula. This expression, according to Craigie (2004:272), refers to new praises that are addressed towards Yahweh.
- For Gerstenberger (1988:145) and Kraus (1988:375, 379) the 'new song' does not refer to something humans have to do, but it is Yahweh who will do something new. The 'new song' has to do with an anticipated new act of Yahweh to redeem his people (Gerstenberger 1988:145; Briggs & Briggs 1969:286).
- This act of redemption for the psalmist will not realise in eschatological times, but in the lifetime of Israel (Kraus 1988:375, 379). The glorification of the righteous people who experienced the redemptive deeds of Yahweh is then expressed as the 'new song' (Kraus 1988:379).
- For Terrien (2003:298) the 'new song' has an eschatological accent that refers to a new time when human history will end. It is a time when the kingdom of God will come (Terrien 2003:298).

## 2.6 Synthesis

The literature review concerning Psalm 33 was conducted in terms of the following: placement of Psalm 33 in the *Psalter*, structure of the psalm, its life setting and theological themes. The theological themes discussed in the literature review are the following: creation, redemption, redemption in Israelite history, Yahweh as sovereign over all nations, covenant, and the 'new song'. Psalm 33:5 states, that the earth is full of the grace of Yahweh is the central statement of the psalm. The rest of the psalm is thus a commentary on the grace (חֲסֶד) of Yahweh that was mentioned in verse 5.

Recent studies in the *Psalter* place emphasis on the theological themes of the *Psalter* as a Book. It is suggested that theological themes contradict themselves, but this study shows later that it is not the case.

Scholars do not agree about the structure of Psalm 33. The following divisions were suggested for the structure:

- Two stanzas: verses 1 to 11, and verses 12 to 22.
- Three stanzas: introduction, verses 1 to 3; body of the psalm, verses 4 to 19; and the conclusion, verses 20 to 22.
- Introduction, verses 1 to 3; and four stanzas: verses 4 to 7; verses 8 to 11; verses 12 to 15; and verses 16 to 19.
- Five stanzas: verses 1 to 3; verses 4 to 7; verses 8 to 11; verses 12 to 15; 16 to 18; and the conclusion in verses 19 to 22, that is not regarded as a stanza.
- Six stanzas: verses 1 to 3; verses 4 to 9; verses 10 to 12; verses 13 to 15; verses 16 to 19; and verses 20 to 22.

This study suggests a structure for Psalm 33 as illustrated in paragraph 4.5.

Psalm 33 is described as a *tehillah*, hymn of praise in Hebrew. It may also be a hymn of appeal requesting Yahweh to redeem them in the same way that he redeemed Israel from Egypt. Furthermore, it may be a poem that is used to teach doctrine or used as a liturgical document. It is also suggested that Psalm 33 is related to the Torah Psalms. Psalms 1, 2, and 33 do not have headings like the other psalms in book 1. According to the structures of Psalms 32 and 33 they are two separate poems. Psalm 33 is regarded as a reply to the last verse of Psalm 32 which instructs the righteous to shout with joy. Psalm 33 is a type of an acrostic psalm, because it consists of 22 lines, but is not in alphabetical order. The sovereignty of Yahweh is emphasised by the exhaustion of the amount of Hebrew alphabetic letters. The 22 lines also consist of 22 parallelisms.

Scholars have diverse views concerning the life setting of Psalm 33. The following life settings were suggested:

- Israelite monarchical period.
- David's kingdom after the battle of Megiddo.
- Post-exilic period.
- Late Greek period.

It is suggested that the psalm cannot be assigned to a specific historical setting, because the text does not give more exegetical indications.

The theological themes *creation* and *redemption* dominate Psalm 33. There is a connection in the psalm between the creative acts of Yahweh and his acts of redemption. The psalm refers to events that happened in the history of Israel: *exodus*, and entrance into Canaan. Israel's name does not feature in the psalm, but it is presupposed that they are the chosen nation (Ps. 33:12). The psalm refers to the creative acts of Yahweh, to compare it with redemptive acts in the history of Israel. The text celebrates Yahweh's acts of creation, and what he did for Israel in the past, as they anticipate future redemption. The sovereignty of Yahweh is emphasised when the psalms refer to his acts of creation and redemption. *Exodus* serves as paradigm for the Old Testament and the *Psalter* about the saving acts of Yahweh. *Exodus* reminds the people that they are promised to have their own land, and to manage themselves.

Yahweh is described as creator and saviour in Psalm 33. The role of Yahweh as creator and saviour are revealed in the way that he creates and redeems through his word. Everything that he said, happened when he created the world (Ps. 33:9; Gen. 1), and everything in the world's history happened according to his advice (Ps. 33:11). Yahweh contained the water of the sea when he created the world (Gen. 1:2). He also contained the water to redeem his people in Egypt and Canaan (Ex. 15:8; Josh. 3:13).

Most scholars agree that the psalm expects redemption in their lifetime, and not in eschatological times. Motivation for redemption to be understood to be in their lifetime is in verse 19, where it states that Yahweh saves a person from death and hunger.

Yahweh is sovereign over the entire world and over all nations. The advice of Yahweh frustrates the plans of the nations (Ps. 33:10), but on the other hand Yahweh chooses people as his own (Ps. 33:12). Psalm 33 refers to Yahweh in an indirect way, that he is the king of Israel, because he is more powerful than all the kings of the world (Ps. 33:16). His advice determines the history of Israel (Ps. 33:11).

The kingship of Yahweh is one of the most important theological themes in the Old Testament. The celebration of the kingship of Yahweh is politically motivated, because Israel does not like to be ruled by foreigners. Israel is chosen by Yahweh to be his inheritance (Ps. 33:12). Therefore they are righteous and upright (Ps. 33:1). The sovereignty of Yahweh is displayed when redemption for non-Israelites becomes a possibility. The condition for redemption is that a nation should fear Yahweh (Ps. 33:18).

The covenant theme is central to Old Testament theology. Yahweh entered a special relationship with Israel when he said: *I will be your God, and you will be my people* (Jer. 7:23). This covenant formula is described from Yahweh's perspective to show that all the responsibility lies with him. Psalm 33:12 contains a type of covenant formula: *Blessed is the nation whose God is Yahweh, the people he elected for his inheritance*. This formula is different, because it is written from the perspective of the people, and not from the perspective of Yahweh. The *nation* (גוֹי) is placed in the beginning of the statement, emphasising the people. This alternative covenant may be because of Israel's exposure to other nations, that Yahweh may have other nations as well as his people. Israel was exposed to other nations through the fall of Israelite monarchy, Babylonian exile, and the destruction and rebuilding of the temple.

The righteous people are instructed to sing a 'new song' for Yahweh (Ps. 33:3). Scholars have diverse views concerning the meaning of a 'new song'. The phrase appears in Psalms 40:3, 96:1, 98:1, 144:9, and 149:1. The following was said about its meaning:

- It may be a new phase where Yahweh's grace is extended to the international community. Yahweh extends redemption to other nations than Israel. *Sing a 'new song'* was first used in the context of the return from Babylon (Isa. 42:10). Israel's exposure to other nations may have broadened their horizons with the understanding that Yahweh is Lord of all people.
- 'New song' may be a reference to the renewal of the covenant, new year festival, or the praises of Yahweh that is sung.
- 'New song' may be a reference to the new covenant (Jer. 31:31-33).

- '*New song*' may be a reference to new praises sung unto Yahweh.
- '*New song*' may be an anticipation that Yahweh will do something new for his people.
- '*New song*' may refer to redemption in eschatological times.

In sum this literature review provides the background for examining the literary, contextual and theological meaning of the psalm.

## Chapter 3: Contextual analysis

### 3.1 Introduction

There are several questions asked concerning the historical context of the text:

- Who is the community behind the text?
- Under which circumstances did the text develop (Gorman 2001:68-69)?

Diachronic studies consider if there were changes made to the text and if a text can be reconstructed that is older than the received text. The exegete should decide, depending on the results, if he / she will take the text in its present form or in an earlier form. At least in a diachronic way, the exegete will have to consider why certain additions were made to the text (if so).

The lack of a heading of Psalm 33 will be questioned; furthermore its cultic setting; date of the psalm; and Psalm 33 as a possible Wisdom Psalm.

### 3.2 Heading

The Psalms existed for many years in verbal form as prayers and hymns, and later written down by other people than the original composers (Burger 1987:9-10). Most of the Psalms are assigned to an important person to give it authority, and thus not written by that person (Burger 1987:10). Only three Psalms in the first book are not attributed to David in their headings, namely Psalms 1, 2, and 33 (Bullock 2001:26). Psalm 33 has no introductory formula like the other psalms it is surrounded with (Barton & Muddiman 2001:377). This shows that Psalm 33 was added in the first book by the later editor / redactor (Briggs & Briggs 1969:286). Psalm 33 does, however, have a superscription in the Septuagint: τῷ Δαυιδ. "Qumran evidence suggests the longer: *To David, a song, a psalm*" (Barton & Muddiman 2001:377).

### 3.3 Cultic and life settings

Craigie (2004:271) makes the following remarks about the cultic setting of Psalm 33: "The psalm was certainly designed for use in Israel's congregational worship, though it may not be possible to determine the cultic setting more precisely; an autumnal festival or covenant festival are possible but uncertain settings, and it may be wisest

simply to identify the psalm as a general hymn of praise, in which are present some of the most central themes of Israel's worship."

Broyles (1999:164) agrees that Psalm 33 is a hymn that was used in congregational worship:

- The liturgist calls upon the congregation and musicians to praise Yahweh (Ps. 33:1-3).
- The congregation consists of the *righteous* and *upright*, and all other people allowed in the temple (Pss. 15, 24). Yahweh needs people to be loyal to him and not to serve idols (Ps. 24:3-6).

For Weiser (1962:289-290) the psalm is a hymn; he wrote the following:

- The first few verses indicate that Psalm 33 is a festival hymn. It is sung by the righteous and accompanied by musical instruments.
- The hymn was sung during the covenant festival at new year, because of traditional elements in the psalm: reference to creation (Ps. 33:6); salvation history where God destroyed the plans of the nations (Ps. 33:10); the presence of Yahweh, as he saw the sons of man (Ps. 33:13); Yahweh elected them (Ps. 33:12); and the grace of Yahweh (Ps. 33:18).
- As the hymn is sung at new year the Israelites remind themselves about the past where Yahweh saved them, and they are hopeful for the future that Yahweh will be with them.

Kraus (1988:375) assumes that: "Psalm 33 belonged to the context of cultic obedience before Yahweh, the king, creator of the world, and Lord of the world (Pss. 95:6; 99:9; 100:4)."

Gerstenberger (1988:145-146) provides possibilities for the life setting of the psalm:

- Israel as dispersed people are the righteous and upright (v. 1), elected (v. 12), people who fear God and wait for him (v. 18), he saves them from death and hunger (v. 19), they trust God (vv. 20-22)."
- The universal references in Psalm 33 (*all the world* in v. 8, *all men* in v. 13) may suggest a synagogal setting possibly because of the missing national

identity, and corresponds to polemical isolation from all unbelievers and oppressors (vv. 10, 16-17). The community's own consciousness of being elected is central to its faith (v. 12), and the theology of the word of God can be seen growing in the psalm, probably in conjunction with synagogal ministry of the word (vv. 4, 6, 9). Finally, some institutions are obvious in this psalm."

- "We may assume therefore, that Psalm 33 is a type of petitionary hymn of the early Jewish community, drawing on ancient mythological traditions (vv. 6-7), as well as historical experiences (vv. 4-5, 10-11)."

Broyles (1999:164) discusses the broader life setting of the psalm: "The promise of deliverance from death and famine (v. 19), along with the mention of military forces (vv. 16-17), may imply that a situation of military siege underlines this psalm. But even if this psalm originated out of such circumstances, its application extends beyond them. The psalms frequently use imagery, especially military imagery, to convey the notion that the most foreboding powers that humans can wield pale before Yahweh."

This study finds that Psalm 33 is a hymn, *tehillah*, which was used in Israel's congregational worship. The righteous and upright are led by musicians to sing this hymn. It is a hymn with basic Israelite theological themes. Nothing more can be said with certainty about the cultic setting. There is nothing in the text that may give a clear cut indication of the cultic setting. Scholars suggested, without overwhelming evidence, that the cultic setting of Psalm 33 may be the following: festival hymn; hymn at new year; synagogal setting; or covenant festival.

However, the text gives a better indication of the life setting. The life setting for this study appears to be that Israel, as diaspora community, waiting on Yahweh for help in real life situations. Real life dangers are referred to in the text: reference to war (Ps. 33:16-17); and death and famine (Ps. 33:19). It is possible that reference to war is not a reflection of their current life setting, but they may refer to the past experiences in order to demonstrate the sovereignty of Yahweh. Psalm 33 may be a combination of experiences of many generations, and not a reflection of a specific time in history. The psalm may have a long oral history dating back to the

monarchical period, and carried through to the post-exilic period as Terrien (2003:300) suggested.

### **3.4 Date of Psalm 33**

Botha and Potgieter (2010:1-7) suggest that Psalm 33 is from the post-exilic period whereby Israel as a nation waits on Yahweh to lift the banishment. Briggs and Briggs (1969:286) observed that the psalm has late Aramaic linguistic attributes, and may thus belong to the late Greek period. Regrettably Briggs and Briggs (1969:286) did not motivate their statement further. Barton and Muddiman (2001:377) suggested that it is not possible to assign Psalm 33 to a specific historical setting.

“A post-exilic date has been proposed, chiefly on account of the allusions to the sacerdotal myth of creation (Gen. 1:1). While this document may not have been incorporated into writing before a late date, its oral formation and growth began and continued during the monarchy. The last years of the Davidic kingdom, especially after the battle of Megiddo may have produced a diatribe against militarism among the disciples of the major prophets (v. 16). A similar development may have accelerated the notion of individual responsibility at the time of Jeremiah” (Terrien 2003:300).

According to Craigie (2004:271) it is difficult to determine from which period Psalm 33 originates:

- It is suggested by scholars that the psalm dates from the post-exilic period. This statement is motivated by the stylistic characteristics and theology of creation by word, for which God is praised for in life threatening situations.
- The style and theology of Psalm 33 does not belong exclusively to the post-exilic period for Craigie, because he observes similar irregular structures and the use of repetition in Psalm 33 and Judges 5. “While the date remains uncertain, there are no overwhelming reasons to oppose a general setting in the cult as practised during the period of the Hebrew monarchy.”

Kraus (1988:375) suggests that it is not possible to date Psalm 33. He says:

- It is assumed that Psalm 33 is from a later date, because it is a type of acrostic psalm, and due to the reference to Genesis 1.
- For Kraus a precise historical assignment is not possible.

Scholars have diverse views concerning the date of the psalm. It has been suggested that the psalm may be from the Israelite monarchical period, post-exilic period, or the late Greek period. This study agrees with Botha and Potgieter (2010:1-7) that Psalm 33 dates from the post-exilic period. The reason for this is the universalistic view of the grace of Yahweh, that the earth is full of his grace (Ps. 33:5). The grace of Yahweh is not only limited to Israel, but also to the whole world. The world view of the Israelites may have been broadened as they were dispersed beyond Israel. That is probably why Israel is not mentioned explicitly as the chosen nation in the psalm. Genesis 1 was written during the Babylonian exile (586-539 BCE) (Van der Watt 2003:100). The phrase “*because he said and it happened*” of Psalm 33:9a refers to the creation narrative in Genesis 1:6 (Brueggemann & Bellinger 2014:166). The “deeps of the sea” (תְּהוֹמוֹת) (Gen. 1:2; Ps. 33:7), is influenced by Babylonian myth (Collins 2018:79). Thus, Psalm 33 is from the exilic or post-exilic periods. Taking into consideration that the psalms were edited over time, this study concludes that the date of Psalm 33 is post-exilic.

### **3.5 Psalm 33 as a possible Wisdom Psalm**

For Botha and Potgieter (2010:5) Psalm 33 appears to be a hymn, but for them it is a poem used to teach doctrine. They also suggest that Psalm 33 is related to the Torah or Wisdom Psalms (Botha & Potgieter 2010:7). They make this connection because the *Torah of Yahweh* in the Torah Psalms (Pss. 19 and 119) is regarded as equivalent to the *word of Yahweh*, which is also found in Psalm 33 (Botha & Potgieter 2010:1). The Torah Psalms are regarded to be part of the so called *interpretational* psalms (Botha & Potgieter 2010:1). The interpretational psalms were created to describe the future rule of Yahweh, and the meaning it has for Israel (Botha & Potgieter 2010:2). By the creation of these literary works and editing of existing psalms they helped the people of Yahweh to place their hope in his future divine rule (Botha & Potgieter 2010:1).

Gerstenberger (1988:20,144-146) agrees that Psalm 33 may also be viewed as a Wisdom Psalm. Gerstenberger (1988:20,144-146), however, disagrees about the use of the Wisdom Psalms, that these were not exclusively used for educational purposes, but as liturgical documents. Schaefer (2001:82) recognises a wisdom trait in Psalm 33 of completeness by the extensive use of *Yahweh*, as well as the 22 lines resembling the Hebrew alphabet. It is relevant to mention the characteristics of the Wisdom Psalms as it appears that Psalm 33 may belong to that genre. Vosloo and Van Rensburg (1999:607) give more insight into the characteristics of the wisdom psalms.

Wisdom Psalms have the following characteristics (Vosloo & Van Rensburg 1999:607):

- The most important characteristic of the Wisdom Psalms is the use of wisdom terminology like wisdom, understand, insight, fear the Lord and serve the Lord. It consists usually of wisdom statements which state that it goes well with the person who fears the Lord (Pss. 1:1; 119:1). The Wisdom Psalms refer usually to the study of the Torah. Synonyms for *Torah* include ordinances, commands, word, and law.
- The Wisdom Psalms have an acrostic structure, where the 22 Hebrew alphabet letters are used at the beginning of every verse.
- Conduct and fortunes of the wicked and those who fear the Lord are compared with one another.

Jacobson (2008:107-120) gives the following reasons why Psalm 33 may be regarded as a Torah Psalm:

- The phrase *that it is fitting to praise* (נְאֻדָּה תְהִלָּה) only appears in Psalm 147:1 that is a Torah Psalm (Jacobson 2008:109).
- “Verses 4 to 5 provide the reasons for praise and begin to build the internal logic of Psalm 33 by detailing the character of God’s word and work. Verse 4 introduces the notion of an independent word of Yahweh. A vast array of prophetic, legal, and Wisdom / Torah traditions stand behind this phrase. Notably, reference to the word of Yahweh is regularly found in the Torah Psalms. To say that Yahweh’s word is upright is to say that such a word is not

only just but, more particularly, that it is well ordered and true. The word *just* (יָשָׁר) is most often used of Yahweh's instruction, judgements, and ways, thus highlighting the connection with the Wisdom/ Torah tradition" (Jacobson 2008:109).

- "Only in Psalm 33:5 and in Psalm 119:64, a Torah Psalm, is the earth full of the grace (חֶסֶד) of Yahweh. Divine grace characterised by care, loyalty, devotion, and faithfulness, does not exist in Psalm 33 apart from qualities of righteousness, justice, and uprightness. The application of uprightness, faithfulness, righteousness, and justice to word and deed draws Psalm 33 most clearly into the circle of Torah Psalms" (Jacobson 2008:110).

According to the characteristics of Wisdom Psalms, there may be a possibility that Psalm 33 may belong to the grouping of Wisdom Psalms together with Psalms 1, 19, and 119. Wisdom terminology is found in Psalm 33. The author(s) of Psalm 33 mention the insight that Yahweh has into the lives of human beings as Yahweh looks down from heaven with understanding. *Insight* is here not assigned to the people that display wisdom in the ways of the Lord, but to Yahweh who has insight into the lives of people. He understands the human beings because he created their inner beings (Ps. 33:15). That is why there may be some doubts of classifying Psalm 33 as a Wisdom Psalm. The word *fear* is also used to describe the attitude of Yahweh's chosen people (Ps. 33:18). The study of the Torah is not explicitly mentioned, but the word of Yahweh, that is equivalent to the Torah, is at the centre of the psalm creating the world and redeeming the people of Yahweh (Ps. 33:6, 9, 11). The word *commandments* are also not explicitly mentioned. The author(s) of Psalm 33 may have played with this idea by issuing several commandments to praise Yahweh in the beginning of the psalm (Ps. 33:1-5). Psalm 33 also has an acrostic structure, because of the 22 lines representing the Hebrew alphabet letters. The fortunes of the wicked and God fearing people are played off against one another. Yahweh will acknowledge the living conditions of those who fear him, and he will frustrate the other nations (Ps. 33:19, 10). Again, this comparison between the ways of the wicked and God fearing people are not mentioned explicitly, it is implied in the text.

In sum, let's observe the summary Nicholson (1995:71) presented concerning the wisdom tradition. Nicholson (1995:71) describes the wisdom tradition of ancient Israel as:

- There is a conviction that it will go well with the people who fear Yahweh (Ps. 128). There exists an interdependence between the fear of the Lord and the wellbeing of a person.
- The fear of the Lord is rewarded with wealth, honor, life and mighty descendants (Prov. 22:4; Ps. 112:2, 3); it will assure a long life (Prov. 10:27); no harm will come over you (Prov. 19:23); evil is avoided (Prov. 16:6); rescued from death and hunger (Prov. 14:27; Ps. 33:19); and you will have no need (Ps. 34:10).

There is a direct relationship between the fear of the Lord and wellbeing in the wisdom tradition. To fear Yahweh is to practise wisdom. When you fear the Yahweh you are rewarded by being saved from death, and you will not go hungry anymore (Ps. 33:19). The people who fear Yahweh, and are chosen as his nation are blessed (Ps. 33:12). The faith, hope and trust that the righteous have in Yahweh may be deep rooted in the wisdom tradition. Faith, hope, and trust are then words used to demand the sovereign acts of Yahweh on their behalf because of their righteousness and fear.

### 3.6 Synthesis

The historical context of Psalm 33 has been considered. The following questions received attention: who is the community behind the text? And, under which circumstances did the text develop? The historical context of Psalm 33 was approached by the following: the lack of heading; cultic and life setting; date; and Psalm 33 as a possible Wisdom Psalm.

Psalm 33 together with Psalms 1 and 2 have no headings in the first book of the *Psalter*, and they are also not assigned to David. It is therefore assumed that Psalm 33 was added at a later stage by the last editors. Psalm 33 does, however, have a heading in the Septuagint as τῷ Δαυιδ. Scripture from Qumran adds the heading to Psalm 33 as: *To David, a song, a psalm.*

The only aspect about the cultic setting that can be said with confidence is that Psalm 33 is a hymn of praise, a *tehillah*. Psalm 33 may be a hymn, that was used to teach doctrine with, because of the basic Hebrew theological elements like creation (Ps. 33:6-9), redemption (Ps 33:19-20), sovereignty of Yahweh (Ps. 33:10-11), and a covenant formula (Ps. 33:12). The song is sung to Yahweh by the righteous, and accompanied by music (Ps. 33:1-3). Other suggested cultic settings could not be confirmed by the text. The psalm does not reveal enough evidence to conclude that it may be a festival hymn, hymn at New Year, at a synagogal setting, or covenantal festival as some scholars claim.

The life setting of the psalm may be a combination of editorial contributions over many years. The text does not pin point a specific time in the history of Israel. The psalm refers to the Reed Sea and Jordan river events, where Yahweh redeemed his people, and life threatening situations where Yahweh is sovereign over (Ps. 33:7, 16-17, 19). The psalm does not date back to the *exodus* time period. The reference to *exodus* only suggests that it is their paradigm for redemption. References are made to war (Ps. 33:16-17), death, and famine (Ps. 33:19). Yahweh is sovereign over history by deciding the outcome of a war, by frustrating a nation and acting in favour of his people (Ps. 33:10). The psalm may refer to a combination of various periods of people experiencing Yahweh as sovereign. Psalm 33 may as well be testifying of principles concerning the sovereignty of Yahweh dated as far back as the monarchical period through to the post-exilic period. The latest editors may be from the post-exilic period, because of the universalistic view concerning the grace of Yahweh (Ps. 33:5). Psalm 33 is dated as post-exilic, because of its Babylonian influence and reference to Genesis 1, which is from the exilic period.

Scholars suggested that Psalm 33 is related to the Wisdom or Torah Psalms. The Torah Psalms acted as *interpretational* psalms to interpret the past and describe the future rule of Yahweh and the meaning of that for Israel. These psalms provided a paradigm for the people of God through which they understand redemption and may place their hope in Yahweh, for his future divine rule. Wisdom psalms usually consist of words like: wisdom, understand, insight, fear, and serve the Lord. Various words in Psalm 33 are used to describe Yahweh's insight into the affairs of the people: to look, see, stare, notice, and his eye that is on them (Ps. 33:13-15, 18). *Insight* is here

not assigned to the people that display wisdom in the ways of the Lord, but to Yahweh that has insight into the lives of people. The people of the world should fear Yahweh, because he is sovereign over creation and history (Ps. 33:8, 18). The phrase *that it is fitting to praise*, also appears in Wisdom Psalms (Ps. 147:1). Psalm 33:1 states that it is fitting for the upright to praise Yahweh. The Wisdom Psalms refer usually to the study of the Torah. Synonyms for *Torah* include ordinances, commands, word, and law. Central to Psalm 33 is the reference to the word of Yahweh that created everything, and his advice that manages the history of the world (Ps. 33:6-11). The word of Yahweh is referred to as just, which means the word is well ordered and true (Ps. 33:4).

The Wisdom Psalms also have an acrostic structure, where the 22 Hebrew alphabet letters are consecutively used as the beginning of every verse. Psalm 33 is a type of an acrostic psalm, because it consists of 22 lines, but it is not in alphabetical order. Conduct and fortunes of the wicked and those who fear the Lord are compared with one another in the Wisdom Psalms. The righteous people in Psalm 33 are the ones chosen by Yahweh as his people (Ps. 33:1, 12), and the people who do not fear him are the nations who's plans are disturbed (Ps. 33:10). The people who do not fear Yahweh are the wicked. The word *wicked* does not appear in the psalm, but it is implied when reference is made to the nations who are frustrated by Yahweh (Ps. 33:10). Only in Psalm 33:5 and in Psalm 119:64, a Torah Psalm, is the earth full of the grace (חֶסֶד) of Yahweh. "Divine grace characterized by care, loyalty, devotion, and faithfulness, does not exist in Psalm 33 apart from qualities of righteousness, justice, and uprightness. The application of uprightness, faithfulness, righteousness, and justice to word and deed draws Psalm 33 most clearly into the circle of Torah Psalms" (Jacobson 2008:110). This study appreciates the Wisdom influence in Psalm 33, because it contributes to the utmost trust Israel have in Yahweh to change their life situation. This study thus agrees that Psalm 33 may be a possible Wisdom Psalm.

There is a direct relationship between the fear of the Lord and wellbeing in the Wisdom tradition. Psalm 33 may thus demand good fortune, because Israel need reward for their fear of Yahweh. Words such as *hope* and *trust* may then describe

Israel's need to be rewarded because they feared Yahweh (Ps. 33:21-22). In the same way Psalm 1 states that it will go well with the righteous, and the wicked will perish.

## Chapter 4: Literary analysis

### 4.1 Introduction

Psalm 33 is analysed in this chapter in terms of the greater context of the *Psalter*; the Hebrew text and translation of Psalm 33 will be presented and the form and structure of the psalm will be discussed.

### 4.2 *Psalter* as connected narrative

The aim of this chapter is to provide an overview of the shape of the *Psalter*, to understand the context of Psalm 33. It is part of the greater as well as smaller group of psalms. As De Claissé-Walford (2006:456): “The *Psalter* is a connected narrative.”

The placement of Psalm 33 in the *Psalter* will be exposed to understand its place in the narrative of the *Psalter* as we have it today.

The *Psalter* as connected narrative will be discussed in terms of the following: the *Psalter* introduced by Psalms 1 and 2 and the effect on Psalm 33; the *Psalter* concluded with Psalm 150 and its relation to Psalm 33; an overview of the five-book structure of the *Psalter*, with the purpose to understand the context of Psalm 33; recent studies of the *Psalter*, and the orientation-disorientation-reorientation scheme of Brueggemann will be applied to Psalm 33.

#### 4.2.1 *Psalter* introduced by Psalms 1 and 2

Psalms 1 and 2 are regarded as the introduction to the *Psalter* (Brueggemann & Bellinger 2014:9-12). The placement of Psalm 1 suggests that the *Psalter* is connected to the Torah (Seybold 1990:15). The righteous person will prosper, but the wicked will perish. A person will be blessed that finds pleasure in the Torah. Everything that he does, will be successful. The wicked person on the other hand will perish. The *Psalter*, as with the Torah, must be meditated by the righteous, and regarded as a book for devotion and prayer (Seybold 1990:15).

Jacobson (2014:55-57) makes the following comments about Psalms 1 and 2 that introduce the *Psalter*:

- Psalms 1 and 2 introduces the *Psalter* as a type of Torah, an assurance that God will rule through the Messiah one day, as prayers and hymns, and an establishment of an identity of the people.
- Psalm 1 as a Wisdom Psalm at the beginning of the *Psalter* may suggest that the *Psalter* must be understood to be wise instruction on how people should live their lives.
- The *Psalter* could thus be read as wisdom and prophesy. The Qumran community and the New Testament also interpreted the *Psalter* as wisdom and prophesy.

De Claissé-Walford (2006:456) added the following about Psalms 1 and 2 that forms the introduction to the *Psalter*:

- Psalm 1 begins with the word *blessed* (אַשְׁרֵי) and Psalm 2 ends with the word *blessed* (אַשְׁרֵי).
- A person is blessed that does not walk in the advice of wicked people (Ps. 1:1). The people are blessed who seek refuge in the Lord (Ps. 2:12).
- The royalty theme of the line of David is introduced in Psalm 2. God appoints a king and decides on his functions. In Psalm 2 the king enters the throne, but in Psalm 89 the king left the throne.

Keck et al. (1996:666) comments on the first word of the *Psalter*, *blessed* (אַשְׁרֵי) (Ps. 1:1):

- Keck et al. translates אַשְׁרֵי with *happy*.
- The *Psalter* describes thus what happiness is about. True happiness is to live a God-centred life, whereby a person complies with God's commandments.
- The people are happy that find joy in the Torah.
- People will be happy that find refuge, and trust in God (Ps. 2:12).

This study agrees with Keck et al. (1996:666), that a main theme of *blessedness* is introduced in Psalms 1 and 2. The word 'blessedness' (אַשְׁרֵי) forms an inclusio of Psalms 1 and 2, whereby Psalm 1 begins with 'blessedness' and Psalm 2 ends with

a statement of 'blessedness' (De Claissé-Walford 2006:456). It is thus observed that the authors had the intention to emphasise the word 'blessedness'.

Seybold (1990:15-16) makes the following comments about the structure of the *Psalter*:

- The Hebrew canon consists of three parts namely the Torah, Prophets, and the Writings. The *Psalter* forms part of the writings.
- The Psalms are introduced with Psalm 1 and connected to the Torah. The Psalms, like the Torah, must be meditated by the righteous, and is regarded as a book for devotion and prayer.
- The book ends with an instruction in Psalm 150 that all the people of the earth should praise Yahweh. The Psalms, thus, begin with an appeal to the righteous and end with an instruction to all people.
- The Septuagint and the Qumran Psalm scroll IIQPs<sup>a</sup> ends with Psalm 151, a biography of David.

A strong relationship between Psalms 1, 2, and 33 may be observed. Psalm 33 shares the Torah / Wisdom traits of Psalm 1. Psalm 33 as possible Torah Psalm is studied in detail in section 3.5, but the relationship between Psalms 1, 2, and 33 will only be noted here shortly.

Psalm 33 shares the naïve conviction of Psalm 1 that it will go well with the righteous, and that the wicked will perish. The following similarities may be found in Psalm 33:

- The word of Yahweh is just, and all his work in faithfulness (Ps. 33:4), he created with his word (Ps. 33:6, 9), and sustains the world with his advice (Pss. 1:6; 33:11).
- Yahweh loves righteousness and justice, the earth is full of his grace (Pss. 1:5; 33:5).
- All the people of the earth will fear Yahweh, every person will be judged by him (Pss. 1:5; 33:8).
- The righteous people are blessed (Pss. 1:1; 33:12).

- Yahweh will take special consideration of the people who fear him (Ps. 33:18). He will save them from death and hunger, because they will be prosperous (Pss. 1:3; 33:19).
- The plans of the wicked come to nothing (Pss. 1:4, 6; 33:10). No king opposing God's people will be victorious, even if they have all military resources available (Ps. 33:16-17).

Psalm 2 shares the theme of royalty with Psalm 33. Yahweh is not referred to as the king of Israel in Psalm 33, but it is presupposed in the way that he opposes all the kings of the world (Ps. 33:16; Wittman 2014:67). As the people expect redemption in Psalm 2 by the Messiah, also in Psalm 33 Israel was redeemed from Egypt, and they will be redeemed in future again with the same power that Yahweh created (Pss. 2:8, 9; 33:7). Psalm 33 should also be understood as the rest of the *Psalter* as a book of wisdom and prophesy, as people expect the Messiah, king, and redeemer representing Yahweh (Ps. 2:6; Jacobson 2014:57).

The word *blessed* (אַשְׁרֵי) forms an inclusio in Psalms 1 and 2, as Psalm 1 begins with the word and Psalm 2 ends with it. Blessedness may also be translated with happiness. It will go well with the righteous people, they will be happy because they found joy in the Torah; they trust in God and find refuge in him; and God is at the centre of their lives (Keck et al. 1996:666). The rest of the *Psalter* is thus a reflection of the shape of human happiness. The righteous people are blessed, who Yahweh elected for his inheritance and they take refuge in him (Pss. 1:1; 2:12; 33:12).

#### **4.2.2 *Psalter* concluding with Psalm 150**

The *Psalter* is concluded with an instruction in Psalm 150 that all the people of the earth should praise Yahweh (Seybold 1990:15). The *Psalter*, thus, begins with an appeal to the righteous individual and ends with an instruction to all the people of the world (Seybold 1990:15). The Septuagint and the Qumran Psalm scroll IIQPs<sup>a</sup> ends with Psalm 151, a short biography about David (Seybold 1990:16).

Psalm 33 shares these traits of particularism and universalism with Psalm 150. Yahweh chooses a nation to be his people and frustrates the other nations, but his grace is also over all the earth (Ps. 33:5, 10, 12). Yahweh gives special

consideration to people that fear him (Ps. 33:18). The nation that fears Yahweh is not specified. Yahweh's role as redeemer is not limited to Israel, but extended to other nations in Psalm 33, as his advice determines the history of all people (Kraus 1988:378). Yahweh is the creator of the whole world, and also the redeemer of the whole world. Israel's theology thus has a universalistic element that Yahweh is God of all (Pss 33:18; 150:6).

#### 4.2.3 Five-book structure of the *Psalter*

The division of the Psalms in five books happened at a later time period when an analogy with the Torah was established (Seybold 1990:18). With this analogy a theological statement is made concerning the Torah as central to the Jewish religion (Bullock 2001:58). Moses is the messianic figure of the Torah, and David is regarded as the messianic figure of the *Psalter*, that is regarded as a type of Torah (Gillingham 2008:7). "Careful study of its five-book structure suggests that it tells a story, that the *Psalter* is a connected narrative rather than a haphazard collection of songs from ancient Israel" (De Claissé-Walford 2006:456).

The *Psalter* was first organised in groups, later in collections, and then into five books (Gillingham 2008:7). The five-book division, as we have it today was formed by the late post-exilic editors (De Claissé-Walford 2006:456). Book I is Psalms 1 to 41, Book II is Psalms 42 to 72, Book III is Psalms 73 to 89, Book IV is Psalms 90 to 106, and Book V is Psalms 107 to 150 (Keck et al. 1996:659). The first book, which is of interest for this study, is subdivided into smaller collections Psalms 3-14; 15-24; 25-34; and 35-41 (Bellinger 2007:120). These divisions are made on the grounds of themes and linguistic considerations (Bellinger 2007:120). One such example is most of the times God is referred to as יהוה in Book I, and אלהים in Book II (Gillingham 2008:7). The reason why God is referred to as אלהים in the second book may be due to the development in Judaism not to express the name of Yahweh out of respect for him (Burger 1987:10). The word יהוה appears 13 times in Psalm 33 and אלהים once in verse 12 (see Annexure B). The extensive use of *Yahweh* in Psalm 33 confirms the psalm's placement in the first book of the *Psalter*. Psalm 33 was added in the first book by the latest editor(s) / redactor(s) (Briggs & Briggs

1969:286). The division was established by ending the books with similar doxologies (Seybold 1990:17):

**Figure 1: doxologies as conclusions to books**

Book 1	Book 2	Book 3	Book 4	Book 5
Praise be to Yahweh, the God of Israel, from everlasting to everlasting, amen, amen (Ps. 41:14)	Praise be to Yahweh, the God of Israel, who alone does marvellous deeds. And praise be to his glorious name for ever, may the whole earth be filled with his glory, amen, amen. (Ps. 72:18-20)	Praise be to Yahweh forever, amen, amen. (Ps. 89:52)	Praise be to Yahweh, the God of Israel, from everlasting to everlasting. And let all the people say, amen. (Ps. 106:48)	Praise the Lord (Pss. 146 -150)

De Claissé-Walford (2006:456-457) provides the following themes of the five books:

- Books I (Psalms 3 to 41) and II (Psalms 42 to 72): history of Israel during the rule of king David.
- Book III (Psalms 73 to 89): Solomon, divided kingdoms, Northern Kingdom taken by Assyrians, and Jerusalem by the Babylonians.
- Book IV (Psalms 90 to 106): Israel in Babylonian exile.
- Book V (Psalms 107 to 150): post-exilic period, and rebuilding of temple.

The first book is subdivided into smaller groups Psalms 3-14, 15-24, 25-34, and 35-41 (Bellinger 2007:120). Book I of the *Psalter* is understood to be the narrative about the reign of David (Jacobson 2014:55).

The fourth book forms the centre of the Psalms, and consists thus of the central theme of the Psalms (Tucker 2008:589). The central themes of the fourth book and the Psalms are the celebration of Yahweh as the only king of Israel and universal king, and a reminder of the redemption from Egypt (Tucker 2008:590). The purpose of these themes is to confirm Israel's belief in the kingship of Yahweh even while they are in exile (Tucker 2008:590). The Psalms can also be divided into two major

parts, namely as books one to three, and books four to five (Keck et al. 1996:659-665). Psalms 146 to 150 are regarded as the conclusion to the *Psalter* (Tucker 2008:589).

Eaton (1967:13) made the following comments concerning the collection of the *Psalter* as we have it today: “Little is known about the history of our present collection. It may have been completed, to take a moderate estimate, in the fourth century BC. Behind the present five divisions are signs of earlier groupings. Smaller sequences of psalms had arisen for various reasons: they may have been connected in liturgical usage, or belonged to the repertoire of a certain guild of temple musicians, resembled each other in theme or wording. Gradually these groups were built up into the present structure.” The *Psalter* thus was developed over many years.

Nasuti (2005:333-334) gives three possible reasons for the systematic arrangement of the *Psalter*:

- Most of the psalms portray advancement from one situation to another. It can be physical advancement from one place to another like a pilgrimage. It can be advancement from one condition to another: from distress to wholeness. It can be movement within a person as he/ she experience God.
- The *Psalter* is connected to the history of the people of Israel. History is interpreted in the Psalms, and the future is anticipated with a certain expectation.
- The *Psalter* is arranged according to the constant changing of life settings of the reader.

#### **4.2.4 Recent studies of the *Psalter***

Recent studies of the Psalms comprise the composition, editorial unity and the message of the Psalms in general (Gericke 2014:44, cf. Balentine 2015:216). In these studies the theological message of the whole of the book of Psalms are studied (Balentine 2015:216). The theology of a psalm is considered in the context of its surrounding Psalms (Tanner 2011:140). In these studies the complexity of the

Psalms is highlighted where opposing elements are mentioned in the same context (Balentine 2015:216).

Whybray (1996:30-31) gives a summary of points of agreement amongst recent scholarly studies concerning the unity of the *Psalter*:

- The *Psalter* consists of collections of psalms that are ordered in a logical way to form a book.
- Most of the Psalms were used at first with a liturgical purpose, but were reinterpreted in the post-exilic period. Motivation for this is the addition of headings of many psalms, and the placement of Psalm 1.
- The new circumstances of the post-exilic period were interpreted, and the temple in Jerusalem was not at the centre anymore.
- The position of Psalms is important for the study of structure and theology of the *Psalter*.
- New interpretation was negotiated by the editors through small grouping of psalms.
- The final editors / redactors maintained the grouping of psalms made at earlier times.
- Most of the psalms were prayers initially, considered as source of instruction and aiding theological thought.

Gericke (2014:44) notes that various theological themes contradict themselves throughout the Psalms. These contradictions are also called *intra-psalmic theological pluralisms* (Gericke 2014:44). The redactional process that had the unification of the Psalms in mind was responsible for these *intra-psalmic* theological pluralisms (Gericke 2014:44-45). The *intra-psalmic* theological pluralisms are religious differences that cannot be reconciled, and it is fluctuations in the application of metaphors and reference to myth (Gericke 2014:44). One such example is the different descriptions of creation as found in Psalms 8:1-8, 33:6, 74:13-14 and 104:24-26 (Gericke 2014:44). This study disagrees with Gericke, because the differences in descriptions of creation may be attributed to poetic freedom. The different texts were written by different people from various periods, each with their own perspective and experience. It must rather be seen as various perspectives on

one theme or tradition. The text should thus be understood in the context of the *Psalter*, and it must be kept in mind that the *Psalter* was put together by many people over a long period of time.

#### 4.2.5 Orientation-disorientation-reorientation scheme

According to Brueggemann (1984:9-10) most of the psalms may be divided into categories of orientation, disorientation, and reorientation. It is an attempt to categorise the life experiences of the biblical believers (Brueggemann 1984:10). According to this scheme Psalm 33 is categorised as a psalm of orientation (Brueggemann 1984:33). This study suggests that Psalm 33 may also be categorised as a psalm of reorientation. The reason for this suggestion is that there are elements of possible earlier situations of disorientation like war, death and hunger (Ps. 33:16-17, 19). The people of Psalm 33 probably find themselves in a state of reorientation after they experienced the situations of disorientation, because of the impression that everything will be well with the chosen nation (Ps. 33:12). The status of orientation is a situation that is ordained by Yahweh (Brueggemann 1984:28). Psalm 33 is further described as a song of creation, because of the reference to Yahweh's acts of creation and control over the universe (Brueggemann 1984:28). Psalm 33 as a psalm of reorientation expects Yahweh to redeem the people of Israel again as he did in the past.

#### 4.3 Text and translation

The text of the Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia is translated in this study as follows (see Annexure A for morphological analysis of each word):

##### Stanza 1: Psalm 33:1-5

1 Shout with joy in Yahweh, you righteous; because a song of praise is fitting for the upright.	יִרְנְנוּ צְדִיקִים בְּיהוָה לְיִשְׁרָיִם נְאֻמָּה תְהִלָּה:
2 Praise Yahweh with a lyre; praise him with a ten stringed instrument.	הִדְנוּ לַיהוָה בְּכִנּוֹר בַּנְּבֶל עֲשׂוֹר זַמְרוּלוֹ:
3 Sing to him a new song; do well by playing with a shout of joy.	שִׁירוּלוֹ שִׁיר תְּדָשׁ הֵיטִיבוּ נֶגֶן בְּתִרוּעָה:
4 Because the word of Yahweh is just;	כִּי־יֵשֶׁר דְּבַר־יְהוָה

and all his work in faithfulness.

וְכָל־מַעֲשָׂהוּ בְּאֵמוּנָה:

5 He loves righteousness and justice;

אָהֵב צְדָקָה וּמִשְׁפָּט

the earth is full of the grace of Yahweh.

תָּסֵד יְהוָה מְלֶאכֶה הָאָרֶץ:

### Stanza 2: Psalm 33:6-9

6 By the word of Yahweh heavens were made;

בְּדְבַר יְהוָה שָׁמַיִם נַעֲשׂוּ

and by the breath of his mouth all its hosts.

וּבְרוּחַ פִּיּוֹכָל־צַבָּאָם:

7 He gathers the waters of the sea like the dam;

כַּבְּנֵס בְּיַד מֵי הַיָּם

he puts the deeps of the sea in storehouses.

נָתַן בְּאֶצְרוֹת תְּהוֹמוֹת:

8 Let all the earth fear Yahweh;

יִירָאוּ מִיְהוָה כָּל־הָאָרֶץ

because of him all the inhabitants of the world will be afraid.

מִמֶּנּוּ יִגְוּרוּ כָּל־יֹשְׁבֵי תֵבֵל:

9 Because he said, and it happened;

כִּי הוּא אָמַר וַיִּהְיֶה

he commanded, and it stood.

הוּא־צִוָּה וַיַּעֲמֵד:

### Stanza 3: Psalm 33:10-12

10 Yahweh destroyed the plan of the nations;

יְהוָה הִפְרִיר עֲצַת־גּוֹיִם

he hindered the thoughts of the peoples.

הִנְיָא מַחְשְׁבוֹת עַמִּים:

11 The advice of Yahweh will stand for all time;

עֲצַת יְהוָה לְעוֹלָם תַּעֲמֹד

the intentions of his heart from generation to generation.

מַחְשְׁבוֹת לִבּוֹ לְדֹרוֹדָר:

12 Blessed is the nation that Yahweh is his God;

אַשְׁרֵי הַגּוֹי אֲשֶׁר־יְהוָה אֱלֹהָיו

the people he elected for his inheritance.

הָעָם | בְּחָרָלְבַחֲלָה לּוֹ:

### Stanza 4: Psalm 33:13-19

13 Yahweh looked from heavens;

מִשָּׁמַיִם הִבִּיט יְהוָה

he saw all the sons of man.

רָאָה אֶת־כָּל־בְּנֵי הָאָדָם:

14 From his dwelling place he stared;

מִמְּכוֹן־שִׁבְתּוֹ הִשְׁגִּיחַ

at all the dwellers of the earth.

אֶל כָּל־יֹשְׁבֵי הָאָרֶץ:

15 The creator of all their hearts;

הַיֹּצֵר יַחַד לִבָּם

he notices all their works.

הַמְבִּיחַ אֶל־כָּל־מַעֲשֵׂיהֶם:

16 No king can be victorious with a great army;

אֵין־הַמְלִיךְ נוֹשֵׁעַ בְּרַב־חַיִל

a hero cannot save himself with great strength.

גִּבּוֹר לֹא־יִנְצֵל בְּרַב־כֹּחַ:

17 It is a lie that the horse establishes redemption;

17 וְשָׁקַר הַסּוֹס לְתִשׁוּעָה

and by his great power he shall not save.

וּבְכֹחַ חֵילוֹ לֹא יִמְלֹט:

18 Behold, the eye of Yahweh is toward the fearful;

18 הִנֵּה עֵינֵי יְהוָה אֶל־יִרְאַיוֹ

to those waiting for his grace.

לְמַיְתְּרֵי לְחַסְדּוֹ:

19 To rescue their life from death;

19 לְהַצִּיל מִמָּוֶת נַפְשָׁם

and to keep them alive in hunger.

וּלְחַיּוֹתָם בְּרָעֵב:

#### Stanza 5: Psalm 33:20-22

20 Our soul waits for Yahweh;

20 וְנַפְשֵׁנוּ חִכְתָּהּ לַיהוָה

he is our helper and refuge.

עֲזָרָנוּ וּמִגִּנּוּן הוּא:

21 Because in him our heart shall rejoice;

21 כִּי־בּוֹ יִשְׂמַח לִבֵּנוּ

because we trusted in his holy name.

כִּי בְשֵׁם קֹדְשׁוֹ בָטַחְנוּ:

22 Let your grace be on us, Yahweh;

22 יְהִי־חַסְדְּךָ יְהוָה עָלֵינוּ

as though you make us hope in you.

כְּאִשְׁרֵי יִתְלַבֵּנוּ לָךְ:

#### 4.4 Form

For the purpose of this study Psalm 33 will be referred to as an acrostic, although it does not comply fully with the conditions of an acrostic psalm (as discussed in section 1.1.3). It is important to acknowledge that the author(s) made an effort to link the psalm with the Hebrew alphabet.

Patterson (2007:416-436) studied all the psalms that has the phrase *sing a new song to the Lord*. He suggests that all these psalms belong to a genre that is known as praise psalms. Patterson (2007:416-436) made the follow comments:

- The phrase *sing a new song to the Lord* appears in Psalms 33:3; 40:3; 96:1; 98:1; 144:9; and 149:1 (Patterson 2007:416).
- Patterson (2007:430-431) compared 4 of the 6 psalms with one another, and determined that they have enough in common to be categorised as a sub-type of praise psalms, namely 'new song' *psalms*. Psalms 33; 96; 98; and 149 share the following themes: They are all praise psalms that celebrate the saving acts of God (Pss. 33:12; 20-22; 96:2-3; 98:1-3; 149:4-5); They state that a 'new song' has to be sung that is accompanied by musical instruments,

celebrating that they are redeemed by God (Pss. 33:1-3; 96:2-3; 98:5-6; 149:1-3).

- They praise God for his righteousness, covenant love, faithfulness, holiness and his name (Pss. 33:4-5; 8, 21-22; 96:2, 9, 13; 98:2-3; 149:3). God is to be praised as the king that everyone must fear (Pss. 33:8, 18; 96:4, 9), and “the one who will judge the world in righteousness and with equity” (Pss. 33:13-17; 96:10-13; 98:6, 9; 149:2, 6-9). The earth is created by God (Pss. 33:8-9; 96:5), and the world awaits the future redemption (Pss. 96:11-13; 98:7-9). Psalms 33 and 98 refers to the *exodus* event and that God must be praised with a ‘new song’ as Miriam did in Exodus 15:19-21.

Thus Psalm 33 is a praise song or hymn, with a further breakdown as a *new song psalm*.

#### 4.5 Structure

Scholars do not agree about the structure of Psalm 33. Some scholars divide the psalm into a concentric structure, that places the main message of the psalm in the middle (see Botha & Potgieter 2010:2-4, cf. Weber 2001:160-161, Witte 2001:525, Zenger 2009:354). Others divide it into a non-concentric structure, that follows a chronological order with the conclusion at the end (see Lohfink & Zenger 2000:89-90, cf. Gahler 1998:17, Clifford 2002:169, Craigie 2004:271, Barton & Muddiman 2001:377, Terrien 2003:295-297, Kraus 1988:375-378).

For the purpose of this study the psalm is divided into a concentric structure. The third stanza, verses 10 to 12 forms thus the main part. The third stanza is about the sovereignty of Yahweh, because he destroys the plans of the nations and his advice will stand forever. The third stanza ends with Yahweh choosing a nation for his inheritance.

**Figure 2: Suggested structure compared to views of scholars**

	Botha & Potgieter (2010:3)	Weber (2001:160-161)	Witte (2002:525) & Zenger (2009:354)	Suggestion by this study	
Verse	Stanza	Stanza	Stanza	Stanza	
1	I	I (A)	I (A)	I	
2					
3					
4		II (B)	II (B)		
5					
6					
7		II	III (C)		III (C)
8					
9					
10					
11	IV (C')		IV (D)	V (D')	III
12					
13					
14					
15	III	V (B')	VI (C')	IV	
16					
17					
18		VI (A')	VII (B')		VIII (A')
19					
20					
21					
22	V				

Scholars who divide the psalm into a concentric structure agree about the first and last parts, but they do not agree about the middle main section as demonstrated above. This study suggests that the central theme of the psalm must be used as

guide in the interpretation of the structure. The central theme of the psalm is to praise Yahweh for his sovereignty (Brueggemann & Bellinger 2014:164, cf. Botha & Potgieter 2010:7, Craigie 2004:271, Kraus 1988:379). The text that describes the sovereignty of Yahweh is found in the middle section of the psalm (vv. 10-12; Botha & Potgieter 2010:3). The sovereignty of Yahweh is then defined by establishing a link between his acts of creation and redemption (Botha & Potgieter 2010:3). This study suggests that the author(s) had a simpler structure in mind. The structure is simplified by keeping the main theme in mind, of which most scholars agree about.

**Figure 3: Suggested structure**

Verse	Stanza	Theme
1	I	Instructions to praise Yahweh, because: it is fitting for the righteous; the word of the Lord is right; he is faithful; he loves righteousness; and the earth is full of his grace.
2		
3		
4		
5		
6	II	Yahweh created with his words: heavens; earth; and the sea.
7		
8		
9		
10	III	Yahweh is sovereign, because he has control over all the nations on the earth. Yahweh chooses people for his inheritance.
11		
12		
13	IV	Yahweh redeems. Yahweh has knowledge of every person in the world. He delivers people from death and famine.
14		
15		
16		
17		
18		
19		
20	V	Confession of trust and hope in Yahweh.
21		
22		

A concentric structure is thus suggested in this study with the sovereignty of Yahweh in the centre (vv. 10-12), with Yahweh's acts of creation above the middle stanza (vv. 6-9), and his acts of redemption below the centre stanza (vv. 13-19). The psalm is introduced by instructions to praise Yahweh, and the reasons for praising him (vv. 1-5; Broyles 1999:164). The reasons why Yahweh should be praised are the following: his word is just and his work is done in faithfulness (v. 4); he loves righteousness;

and the earth is full of his grace (v. 5). The psalm is then concluded with a confession of hope and trust in Yahweh (vv. 20-22).

#### 4.6 Synthesis

It is relevant to consider Psalm 33 in the context of the introductory and closing psalms. Psalm 33 shares the conviction with Psalm 1 that it will go well with the righteous and the wicked shall perish. In summary it can be said that the righteous in Psalm 33 trust Yahweh that he will be faithful to them to redeem them, and take action towards the wicked people (Ps. 33:16). There are also similarities between the royal theme of Psalm 2 and Yahweh that takes the position of king of Israel and universal king by taking action against the kings of the world in Psalm 33:16-17. Psalm 33 should also be understood as the rest of the *Psalter* as a book of wisdom and prophesy, as people expect the Messiah, king, and redeemer. The word *blessed* (אַשְׁרֵי) that forms an inclusio with Psalms 1 and 2, appears also in Psalm 33. The people that Yahweh chooses for his inheritance will be blessed, they will be happy because they will experience the advantages of a chosen people (Ps. 33:12). The advantages of being the chosen people are to be helped (Ps. 33:20); find refuge in Yahweh (Ps. 33:20); sustained by Yahweh (Ps. 33:11); considered in a special way by Yahweh (Ps. 33:18); saved from death (Ps. 33:19); and will not die of hunger (Ps. 33:19).

Psalm 33 shares the universalistic character of Yahweh's redemption with Psalm 150 that concludes the *Psalter*. All the people of the world are instructed to praise Yahweh in Psalm 150:6, the psalm states that everything that has breath must praise Yahweh. The grace of Yahweh is extended to other people than Israel also, since Yahweh's grace is over all the world (Ps. 33:5). Psalm 33 has a universalistic view that any nation, who fears Yahweh, may be his people (Ps. 33:18). The universalistic view of Psalm 33 is strengthened by the fact that Israel's name is not mentioned in the psalm.

The *Psalter* is divided into five books by the latest editors when an analogy is made with the Torah. Book I is Psalms 1 to 41, Book II is Psalms 42 to 72, Book III is Psalms 73 to 89, Book IV is Psalms 90 to 106, and Book V is Psalms 107 to 150.

Books I and II describe the history of Israel during the rule of king David. Book III is about the time of Solomon; divided kingdoms; takeover of Jerusalem by Babylon. Book IV speaks to Israel that is in exile. Book IV consists of the central theme of the *Psalter* namely, that Yahweh is celebrated to be the king of Israel, and reminds the people of the past redemption of the *exodus* event. Book V is about return to Jerusalem. The division was established by ending the books with similar doxologies as presented in figure 1. These divisions are made on the grounds of theological themes and linguistic attributes. Most of the times God is referred to as יהוה in Book I, and אלהים in Book II. The reason why God is referred to as אלהים in the second book may be due to the development in Judaism not to express the name of Yahweh out of respect for him. The word יהוה appears 13 times in Psalm 33 and אלהים once in verse 12 (see Annexure B). The extensive use of *Yahweh* in Psalm 33 confirms the psalm's placement in the first book of the *Psalter*, although it was placed there at a later stage, most probably by the latest editors / redactors of the post-exilic period. Psalm 33 connects with the editor's intention of making the *Psalter* a type of Torah, because the psalm has the following theological themes: covenant; creation with a word; redemption by the advice of Yahweh; righteousness; grace; election; refuge in Yahweh; Yahweh as helper; and hope.

Three possible reasons are given for the arrangement of the *Psalter*: Most of the psalms portray advancement from one situation to another. It can be physical advancement from one place to another like a pilgrimage, or advancement from one condition to another; The *Psalter* reflects the history of the people of Israel and is a reflection of the interpretation of history, and their expectations for the future; The *Psalter* is witness to the constant changing of life situations of the people from many generations.

In recent studies of the *Psalter* the theological message of the whole book is considered. An individual psalm contributes thus to the message of the *Psalter*. The *Psalter* consists of collections of psalms, but it is ordered in book form. The final editors / redactors maintained grouping of psalms made by earlier times. The circumstances of the post-exilic period were interpreted into the Psalms by the latest editors, although they maintained grouping of psalms made at earlier times. Most of

the psalms were prayers initially, considered as source of instruction and aiding theological thought. The position of the psalms is important for the study of the structure and theology of the *Psalter*.

This study suggests that theological themes do not contradict themselves in the *Psalter* as Gericke claims. It must rather be seen as people, who reflect from different periods providing different perspectives on a theological theme from their unique different circumstances.

Brueggemann divides most of the psalms into categories of orientation, disorientation, and reorientation. This method describes the life situation that the readers find them in. Brueggemann classifies Psalm 33 as a psalm of orientation according to this scheme. This study suggests that Psalm 33 may rather be classified as a psalm of reorientation, because of reference to situations of disorientation like war, death, and hunger (Ps. 33:16-17, 19), from which they have recovered. The readers may experience now a situation of reorientation, because they may experience now a situation of blessedness after the ordeals of war and famine (Ps. 33:12).

The form of Psalm 33 is categorised as a non-acrostic alphabetical psalm, because of the attempt of the author(s) to link the psalm with the Hebrew alphabet. The psalm is a *tehillah*, a song of praise in Hebrew. Patterson suggests that the psalm may be further classified as a praise psalm, because of its connection to the other psalms that contain the phrase *sing a new song* (Ps. 33; 96; 98; and 149).

This study follows the proposal of some scholars to divide Psalm 33 into a concentric structure. The psalm is divided into a concentric structure (as illustrated in figure 2). Here is a summary:

- The psalm consists of five stanzas, of which stanza 3 forms the middle main section of the psalm.
- Stanza 1 (vv. 1-5): instruction to praise Yahweh, and with reasons to do so.
- Stanza 2 (vv. 6-9): Yahweh created.

- Stanza 3 (vv. 10-12): Yahweh is sovereign, which forms the central theme of the psalm.
- Stanza 4 (vv. 13-19): Yahweh redeems.
- Stanza 5 (vv. 20-22): Confession of trust and hope.

Against this background a detail analysis follows in chapter 5.

## Chapter 5: Detail analysis

### 5.1 Introduction

- A detail analysis of Psalm 33 is conducted in this chapter in terms of the structure established in this study (illustrated in figure 2). The main parts of the structure are:
- Instruction to praise Yahweh (vv. 1-5).
- Yahweh created (vv. 6-9).
- Yahweh is sovereign (vv. 10-12).
- Yahweh redeems (vv. 13-19).
- and hope in Yahweh (vv. 20-22).

### 5.2 Instructions to praise Yahweh (stanza 1: Psalm 33:1-5)

1 Shout with joy in Yahweh, you righteous; because a song of praise is fitting for the upright.	יִרְנְנוּ צְדִיקִים בְּיהוָה לְיִשְׁרָיִם נְאֻמָּה תְהִלָּה:
2 Praise Yahweh with a lyre; praise him with a ten stringed instrument.	הוֹדוּ לַיהוָה בְּכִנּוֹר בַּנְּבֶל עֲשׂוֹר וּמְרוֹלָו:
3 Sing to him a new song; do well by playing with a shout of joy.	שִׁירוּ-לוֹ שִׁיר חֲדָשׁ הֵיטִיבוּ נֶגֶן בְּתִרוּעָה:
4 Because the word of Yahweh is just; and all his work in faithfulness.	כִּי-יָשָׁר דְּבַר-יְהוָה וְכָל-מַעֲשָׂהוּ בְּאֱמוּנָה:
5 He loves righteousness and justice; the earth is full of the grace of Yahweh.	אָהֵב צְדָקָה וּמִשְׁפָּט תִּסָּד יְהוָה מְלֵאָה הָאָרֶץ:

Verses 1 to 3 contain instructions to praise Yahweh. The righteous should: shout with joy; praise Yahweh with a lyre; praise him with a ten stringed instrument; sing a 'new song' to him; and they must do well by playing with a shout of joy. Verses 4 and 5 are introduced by the word *because* and then the reasons follow why Yahweh should be praised. The reasons are: the word of Yahweh is just; all his work is done in faithfulness; he loves righteousness and justice; and the earth is full of the grace of Yahweh.

### 5.2.1 Response to Psalm 32

Israel was instructed in Psalm 32:11 to praise Yahweh after they received forgiveness. Psalm 33 is a response to Psalm 32 when the people are called to praise Yahweh (Ps. 33:1-3; Brueggemann & Bellinger 2014:164). Psalm 33 was added to the group of Davidic Psalms to emphasise Psalm 32:10,11 with key words such as trust, grace, rejoice and righteous ones (Allen et al. 1987:16). Psalm 33 does not have a heading in the Hebrew text, which is odd for the first book, because it may be complementing Psalm 32 (Grogan 2008:86). Psalm 33 does however have a superscription in the Septuagint: τῷ Δαυιδ.

Psalms 32 and 33 share the following special relationship:

- “Both psalms are composed in didactic style: confession and instruction (Ps. 32), praise and instruction” (Ps. 33; Schaefer 2001:81).
- Both psalms indicate the grace that Yahweh gives to forgive the sins of people (Keck et al. 1996:809). The forgiveness of sins is not mentioned explicitly in Psalm 33, but it is implied by the use of the word *righteous* (v. 1).
- Both psalms consist of expressions of blessedness: blessed is the person whose sins are forgiven (Ps. 32:1-2), and blessed is the nation that Yahweh chose for his inheritance (Ps. 33:12; Grogan 2008:86).
- Both psalms describe God as teacher: I will teach you...I will counsel you (Ps. 32:8), and the word of the Lord is right (Ps. 33:4; Grogan 2008:86).
- Both psalms end with rejoice  $\text{פָּרְצוּ}$  (Pss. 32:11; 33:21) because of their trust  $\text{בְּיְהוָה}$  (Pss. 32:10; 33:21) in the grace  $\text{חַסְדֵּךָ}$  (Pss. 32:10; 33:18, 22) of Yahweh (Schaefer 2001:81).
- The righteous and upright are instructed to shout with joy (Pss. 32:11; 33:1; Keck et al. 1996:809).
- The word *trust* ( $\text{בְּיְהוָה}$ ) in Psalm 32:11 is mentioned in the peak of Psalm 33:21, where it is stated that their hearts shall rejoice, because they trusted in his holy Name. The grace of God that fills the earth (Ps. 33:5) is also upon the people that trust in him (Ps. 32:11). The grace of God that fills the earth in Psalm 33:5 forms the main statement of Psalm 33, and all the

verses that follow is a commentary on this statement (Keck et al. 1996:809).

- The grace of God that forgives sins in Psalm 32 is responsible for creation (Ps. 33:6-9), managing history (Ps. 33:10-12), acknowledging individuals (Ps. 33:13-15), manages heads of countries (Ps. 33:16-17), and gives hope for the people of God (Keck et al. 1996:809).

The structure of Psalms 32 and 33 indicates that it is two separate poems (Allen et al. 1971:235). Psalm 33 is introduced by five imperatives that the righteous should praise Yahweh. The righteous person are called so because his / her sins were forgiven in Psalm 32, but righteousness in Psalm 33 has to do with Yahweh who chooses a nation as his people.

### **5.2.2 Righteous instructed to praise**

Verses 1-5 are regarded as the introductory unit. Verses 1-3 consist of five imperatives to praise Yahweh: shout with joy; praise (x2); sing; and to do well by playing. The numerous instructions to praise Yahweh place all the emphasis on him, and to encourage complete dependence on him (Brueggemann & Bellinger 2014:164). It is common for a psalm to begin in this way with various imperatives (Gerstenberger 1988:144).

Jacobson (2014:313-314) makes the following comments about the shape of the praises in Psalm 33:

- The imperatives, where the righteous are instructed to praise, are plural. They thus serve as proof that the psalm was developed in a group setting. The individual that joins the group takes up the identity of the group, and the group gets their identity from their relationship with Yahweh.
- The praises are accompanied by musical instruments (v. 2). Two instruments are mentioned: lyre and a ten stringed instrument. These two instruments represent all the instruments in an orchestra. The number 10 symbolises completeness.

The *righteous* and *upright* are instructed to praise Yahweh (Ps. 33:1). *Righteous* and *upright* describe the condition of the sacral tradition to enter the sacred area (Kraus 1988:375). The praises are only authentic when it is done by people, who are righteous before God (Mays 1994:149). The words *righteous* and *just* form an *inclusio* as it appears in verse 1 and verses 4-5, thus combining verses 1-3 with verses 4-5 (Jacobson 2008:110).

Creach (2011:49-61) suggests that the life and fate of the righteous people as opposed to the wicked is the central theme of the *Psalter*. This theme also appears in Psalm 33:

- Defining righteous (צַדִּיק): they praise God (Ps. 33:1), they are oppressed by the wicked and find their refuge in him (Pss. 9:10; 34:7), forgiveness for their sins (Ps. 38:18), and the poor / afflicted depend on God for intervention (Pss. 9:13; 143; Creach 2011:50). Yahweh redeems the righteous with the same power that he created the world (Ps. 33:7). The chosen nation is the righteous people (Ps. 33:12). Yahweh saves the righteous from death and hunger (Ps. 33:19). He destroys the plans of the nations that may be seen as the wicked people (Ps. 33:10).
- Creach's (2011:51-52) motivation for suggesting that the life and fate of the righteous is the central theme the *Psalter* is that *righteousness* (צַדִּיק), *upright* (יָשָׁר) and other words synonymous to it (poor / afflicted, oppressed, needy) appear 125 times in the *Psalter*, and the word *wicked* (רָשָׁע) twice. Furthermore, the theme of the righteous and wicked is introduced in Psalms 1 and 2, and paralleled with Psalms 41 and 72, which states that it goes well with the righteous and that they will not be overpowered by the enemy (Creach 2011:51-55). Yahweh gives victory to the righteous by deciding the outcome of war (Ps. 33:16-18). The outcome of war does not depend on a king, hero, or a horse, but it is dependent on the advice of Yahweh.

People are called righteous and upright when they are chosen by God (Clifford 2002:170). God is described as upright (יָשָׁר) (Pss. 25:8, 92:15), and the people whose identity is in him, are also called *upright* (Keck et al. 1996:810). The righteous

people did not do anything to deserve their righteousness, but God forgave their sins out of his grace and declared them as righteous (Vosloo & Van Rensburg 1999:628). Israel is the chosen people not out of merit, but by the love of Yahweh (Deut. 7:8; Smal 1956:74). Yahweh constituted Israel to be righteous - the people formally known to be inconspicuous, and without righteousness (Deut. 7:7-8; Smal 1956:74). Yahweh acknowledges the people that fear him and wait on his grace. The righteous people experience Yahweh's redemptive act as a 'new song' (Kraus 1988:379). People are righteous and upright when Yahweh chose them as a nation. Yahweh appreciates it when the people fear him.

### **5.2.3 Yahweh is righteous, faithful and just**

Verses 4-5 give the reasons why Yahweh should be praised, starting with *because*. Imperatives followed by reasons are common to Israelite hymns (Brueggemann 1984:33). The reasons given why Yahweh should be praised is for his character: righteousness (v. 4), faithfulness (v. 4), justice (v. 5), and grace (v. 5; Jacobson 2008:109). The text mentions that Yahweh's word is just, and his work is done in faithfulness. Smal (1956:69) suggests that the meaning of *the word of Yahweh that is just*, is that his word is totally fulfilled. Yahweh's word and work, which is paralleled with each other, introduce the themes of creation and redemption. The reason why God must be praised, is that he reigns over the whole universe, and he is the source of life (Keck et al. 1996:810). Yahweh is the creator of the world and manager of human history.

The phrase *God created in wisdom*, means that he established order (Job 28:25-27; Pss. 104:24; 136:5; 147:5; Keel 1997:205). The *Psalter* views creation as a display of God's faithfulness, because of the order that he establishes, like providing food in seasonal cycles and structure of power amongst creatures (Jacobson 2011:118-119). God's righteousness has to do with bringing twofold order by judging the enemies of Israel for their injustices and redemption of his people (Kraus 1986:42-43). "God's creative activity established order; his righteousness re-establishes and confirms this order" (Grogan 2008:249). According to these words that describe the characteristics of God, Israel experience him as "utterly reliable" (Brueggemann & Bellinger 2014:165). God's order according to Psalm 33 is that the chosen nation is redeemed, and the people, who had done injustice to them, are punished. The

chosen nation has hope in Yahweh for maintaining this order. They subject themselves fully under his rule with the certainty that Yahweh will save them even from famine.

#### **5.2.4 Yahweh, God of Israel and the universe**

*Yahweh* is the name with which God revealed himself to Moses at Mount Sinai (Kraus 1986:20). The word *Yahweh* dominates the psalm in the same way as he dominates the life of Israel; it is repeated 13 times in Psalm 33 (Jacobson 2008:109). Yahweh is in control of the whole world and all the people in it. Yahweh not only dominates Israel, but all the nations of the world. He breaks the plans of the nations, and his advice has the last say (Ps. 33:10-11). Verse 21 reads that there is trust in the name of Yahweh, why in his name and not in himself? When a person dies his name is forgotten (Pss. 83:4; 109:13), a name thus means "life, identity, and presence" (Kraus 1986:20). Yahweh gives life by his word. He shares his identity of righteousness with the people he chose, and the people who fear him. This God is present in creation and in every human interaction. Yahweh creates and manages everything in the world. The name of Yahweh thus represents his identity of righteousness and sovereignty. Yahweh is his name.

Yahweh is sovereign over all the earth according to the *Psalter*, as Smal (1956:218-219) observes:

- Yahweh's reign is over all the nations and in the first place over his chosen people, Israel (Ps. 33:12). The heathen world acknowledges Yahweh as Lord when they witness the power that he gives his chosen nation (Ps. 68:38). This God revealed this power by saving Israel from Egypt (Ps. 77:15-16).
- Yahweh is the king, who reigns over the entire world (Pss. 47:3, 8; 59:14).
- Yahweh's reign is so great that even his enemies praise him (Ps. 66:3, 7).
- Yahweh also reigns over the underworld, because he can save a person from death (Ps. 30:4). Yahweh saves people who died from the underworld by bringing them to him (Ps. 49:16).
- Yahweh submits nature under his reign (Pss. 46:3, 4; 50:3; 77:17-20).

### 5.2.5 New song

Scholars have diverse views about the meaning of a 'new song' (v. 3). Some of them include the following:

a) Brueggemann (1984:33) suggests that a 'new song' refers to a new world that Yahweh is creating, and that this new world will be managed by the righteousness and faithfulness of Yahweh. The righteous, who are instructed to praise (v. 1), are paralleled with the righteousness of Yahweh (vv. 4-5). This parallel describes the relationship between Yahweh and his people as in unity (Brueggemann 1984:33-34). This study suggests that the 'new song' does not refer to a new world, but to an old order. Psalm 33 is about celebrating the order that Yahweh has put in place. Yahweh's order entails that his people are redeemed, and that he takes action against the nation that oppressed them. The 'new song', thus, refers to new works that Yahweh did to the benefit of the chosen nation as predetermined by the order that he has put in place. Yahweh redeems his people and they are made righteous, as he is.

b) Lohfink and Zenger (2000:113) suggest that the 'new song' may be a reference to the widening of the scope of Yahweh's grace to the other nations. It is not only the chosen nation that will experience the benefit of Yahweh's grace, but other people too, if they respect Yahweh as Lord.

The expression '*sing a new song*' was first used in the context of the return from Babylon in Isaiah 42:10. There it refers to the new message of Yahweh's interest to redeem other nations as well (Lohfink & Zenger 2000:113). Other references where this expression is used are in Psalms 40:3, 96:1, 98:1, 144:9, and 149:1 (Patterson 2007:416). In Psalms 144:9 and 149:1 the 'new song' is used in the context of all the nations of the earth (Lohfink & Zenger 2000:113-114). The experience of exile may have broadened their horizons to discover that Yahweh also acknowledges other nations, who fear him.

In Psalms 96:1 and 98:1 the 'new song' is used in the context where Israel's relationship with the other nations is reconsidered (Lohfink & Zenger 2000:113-114). Israel is regarded as a nation, who will bless other nations by spreading the

message of Yahweh's grace. For Gerstenberger (1988:145) the 'new song' does not refer to something humans have to do, but it is Yahweh, who will do something new. The 'new song' has to do with an anticipated new act of Yahweh to save his people (Briggs & Briggs 1969:286). This study agrees with the fact that the 'new song' refers to something new that Yahweh will do. The new act of Yahweh is that the scope of his grace is not only for Israel, but to all the people of the world. The earth is full of the grace of Yahweh, according to Psalm 33:5. The 'new song' (Ps. 33:3) stands in contrast with the 'old songs' Israel used to sing in Zion (Ps. 137:3), before their captivity by the Babylonians. The 'new song' thus introduces a new area in Israel's history.

c) The 'new song' according to Brown (2014:207) may be an attempt to reform the sacrificial cult. Yahweh did not want sacrifices but only a hymn of praise. A hymn of praise was the new interpretation of bringing sacrifice to Yahweh (Brown 2014:207). Praise is thus a form of sacrificial act.

d) The 'new song' may be the renewal of the covenant (Jer. 31:31-33). The combination of words found in verses 1-5 is also used in other texts to refer to the covenant, namely: righteousness, faithfulness, justice, and grace (Hos. 2:19-20; Jer. 9:24; Ps. 145:8-9; Ex. 34:6-7; Brueggemann 1984:34). The word לֵב (heart) appears in Psalm 33 as well as in the new covenant in Jeremiah 31:31-33. In Psalm 33:15 Yahweh shows compassion and understanding towards the people of the world, because he is the maker of their hearts. In Jeremiah 31:33 Yahweh will make a new covenant by writing his Torah on the hearts of people. A possible correlation between the 'new song' and the renewal of the covenant may thus exist.

Terrien (2003:51) makes the following comments concerning the 'new song' as renewal of the covenant: "The psalmist boasted of an eternal covenant, which was therefore suprahistorical, one of the patriarchs (Ps. 105:8-11), another with David (Ps. 89:36-37). By hailing Jesus as the son of David and considering him the Davidic Messiah, the early church divested *the new covenant* of its eschatological character and transmuted the alliance, always to come, into a historical event that had come to pass (hence the new calendar chronology, B.C.E. and C.E.). This *historization* of *the*

*new song*, the song of ultimate newness, had its roots in the *Psalter* (Pss. 33:3; 40:3; 96:1; 144:9; 149:1; cf. Isa. 42:10; and again Jer. 31:31).”

This study appreciates Terrien’s view that the ‘new song’ is a reinterpretation of the covenant, since covenant themes feature strongly in Psalm 33.

e) Craigie (2004:272) compares the ‘new song’ in Psalm 33:3 with Psalms 96:1, 98:1 and 149:1. According to these texts it is normally used in the Psalms as an introductory formula. This expression for Craigie (2004:272) refers to new praises that are addressed towards Yahweh. It is possible that the new praises that Yahweh has put in the mouths of the author(s) may be new praises.

f) According to Barton and Muddiman (2001:377) the expected redemption will be in the lifetime of Israel. The glorification of the righteous people who experienced the saving deeds of Yahweh is then expressed as the ‘new song’ (Kraus 1988:379). This study agrees with Barton and Muddiman that the righteous Psalm 33 expect redemption from Yahweh in their lifetime, because the struggles on earth are mentioned like war and famine, and not what life after death will be like. Terrien (2003:298) disagrees and suggests that the ‘new song’ has an eschatological accent that refers to a new time when human history will end. It is a time when the kingdom of God will come (Terrien 2003:298).

### 5.3 Yahweh created and redeems (stanza 2: Psalm 33:6-9)

6 By the word of Yahweh heavens were made;

בְּדְבַר יְהוָה שָׁמַיִם נִעֲשׂוּ

and by the breath of his mouth all its hosts.

וּבְרוּחַ פִּיּוֹכָל־צָבָאָם:

7 He gathers the waters of the sea like the dam;

כִּבְנֵס בְּיַד מִי הַיָּם

he puts the deeps of the sea in storehouses.

נִתְּן בְּאֲצֻרוֹת תְּהוֹמוֹת:

8 Let all the earth fear Yahweh;

יִירָאוּ מִיְהוָה כָּל־הָאָרֶץ

because of him all the inhabitants of the world will be afraid.

מִמֶּנּוּ יִגְוֹרוּ כָּל־יֹשְׁבֵי תֵבֵל:

9 Because he said, and it happened;

כִּי הוּא אָמַר וַיִּגְהִי

he commanded, and it stood.

הוּא־צִוָּה וַיַּעֲמֵד:

The stanza of verses 6-9 begins and ends with statements that Yahweh created the world by his word. Verse 7 gives more detail of creation and the exodus event that involves water, while verse 8 states that all the inhabitants of the earth will fear Yahweh because of that. Yahweh's acts of creation and redemption are discussed together. It was the intention of the author(s) of Psalm 33 to establish a link between Yahweh's acts of creation and redemption. They express confidence in the redemption by Yahweh, because he redeems his people with the same power that he created.

Psalm 33, along with Psalms 8, 19, 29, 104, 139 and 148, are known as the creation psalms, and the creation theme also appears in Psalms 68, 89, 102, and 139 (Jacobson 2011:118). The creation of the earth is not mentioned in Psalm 33, but it is presupposed with the confinement of the waters of the sea (v. 7; Jacobson 2008:112). A connection between creation, where Yahweh's spirit hovered over the water (Gen. 1:2), and where Yahweh blew over the Reed Sea is established (Ex. 15:8; Botha & Potgieter 2010:5). In the same way as Yahweh created with the wind of his word, he also redeemed his people at the Reed Sea by blowing over the water (vv. 6-7). The *exodus* event is of great theological importance in the Old Testament, because it serves as paradigm for Israel of future redemption from enemies (Grogan 2008:251). Israel expresses confidence in Yahweh's ability to redeem, because they have a solid reference of what Yahweh did for them in the past.

Statements of creation in Psalm 33 reflect dependence on Yahweh, and distance between creator and creation (Brueggemann 1984:34). Creation is dependent on Yahweh for existence. A hierarchy exists where Yahweh is the provider and the people of the world are the recipients. The author(s) of Psalm 33 urge the readers to have reverence for Yahweh, because they are fully dependent on him.

A link is established in the psalm between Yahweh's acts of creation and his acts of redemption, by bringing all the interactions that Yahweh had with water, together (Botha & Potgieter 2010:5-6). Yahweh created by managing the waters and also used the waters to redeem Israel. The way how *Yahweh gathers the waters of the sea like the dam* and how *he puts the deeps of the sea in storehouses* (Ps. 33:7) as

a creation process alludes to the creation narrative (Gen. 1:2), the *exodus* event (Ex 15:8), and entrance into Canaan (Josh. 3:13; Craigie 2004:273; Lohfink & Zenger 2000:92). Psalm 33:7 is a simile, where unlike elements are compared: to gather the sea like a dam, and to put the sea into storehouses (Alden 1974:81). The creation narrative where chaos is overcome is influenced by Canaanite mythology as captured in Ugaritic poetry from the 14<sup>th</sup> century BC (Murphy 2000:40-41). The Canaanite storm god Baal, overcame the sea god Yam (יָם) (Murphy 2000:41).

The water of Psalm 33:7a is water of יָם the heavenly ocean that is gathered like a dam (Seybold 1990:182-183). The word יָם has its origin as the god of the Mediterranean Sea and rivers at Ugarit (Cargill 2016:39). The Old Testament uses יָם to refer to the sea without the personification of being a god, but with the same characteristics of being disorderly and unmanageable (Cargill 2016:39-40). On the other hand, the water of Psalm 33:7b is the תְּהוֹמוֹת the primeval ocean that is kept in storehouses (Keel 1997:40, 57). A parallelism and merism is thus established between the different types of oceans to emphasise that God created all waters and have power over it. יָם and תְּהוֹמוֹת are used as word pairs in Exodus 15:8, Psalm 33:7, 77:17, 104:6 and in reverse order in Jonah 2:6 and Job 38:30 (Avishur 1994:181).

Briggs and Briggs (1969:287) are of the opinion that the way how Yahweh gathers the sea like a dam does not refer to the *exodus* event (Ex. 15:8), but rather to Job 38:22-37 where the sea is contained by doors and bars. This study suggests that it is more convincing that reference to water in Psalm 33 alludes to the creation narrative, *exodus* and entrance into Canaan. In all three these instances the water stood up like a dam wall, with no reference of doors and bars that contain the water like in Psalm 33.

Alden (1974:81) suggests that *word* and *breath* in Psalm 33 refers to the second and third persons in the trinity. But *breath* and *word* of Yahweh are placed in parallel, thus having the same meaning (v. 6; Brown 2002:181). Thus, the text had no intention of distinguishing between persons of the trinity. Word and breath describes only the means of how God created. Psalm 33 is the only psalm that refers to creation that happened by the word of Yahweh (Jacobson 2008:107). The psalmist

makes a connection between the Reed Sea (Ex. 15) and creation (Gen. 1), namely that it all happened by the word of Yahweh (Botha & Potgieter 2010:6). Verses 6-9 are concluded with *because*, that follows with a reason why Yahweh should be feared: because he created with his word (Jacobson 2008:112). The words *because he said and it happened* of Psalm 33:9a refer to the first creation narrative (Gen. 1; Brueggemann & Bellinger 2014:166). This statement occurs five times as a refrain in the first creation narrative (Botha & Potgieter 2010:5). The parallel of *it happened* and *it stood* in Psalm 33:9 is for Schaefer (2001:82) emphasis on Yahweh's ongoing acts of creation in history. Jacobson (2014:315) agrees and states the following: "The syntax and the rhetoric of the psalm point to the incomplete and ongoing nature of God's work: *it is* and *it endures*." Yahweh spoke a word and creation came into being. He spoke a word and he redeemed his people. Creation and the Reed Sea events serve as proof for the psalmist that the earth is full of the grace of Yahweh (v. 5), because his grace was the motive behind it all (Botha & Potgieter 2010:6). Yahweh created the whole world through his grace, and redeemed his people through grace.

The psalm focuses on the word of Yahweh that creates and manages the history of all human beings (Brueggemann & Bellinger 2014:166). Yahweh's acts of creation cannot be distinguished from the way that he manages history (Grogan 2008:247). Yahweh created the world through his grace, and he manages the history of all people through his grace. The *Psalter's* reference to creation is not to give an account how creation came into existence, but to reflect on creation and the way that God manages history as a display of his faithfulness (Jacobson 2011:118-119).

Yahweh is keeper over the created world. Smal (1956:212) made the following observations in the *Psalter* about Yahweh's sustenance of the world:

- All life came from Yahweh, and he sustains it all (Pss. 36:10; 104:29-30).
- Yahweh gives gifts to all people, and not only to Israel. He allows every person to govern his life (Ps. 8:7).
- Yahweh's compassion is not only limited to Israel, but it is on all his works (Ps. 145:9). All living beings are the objects of his care (Ps 33:5).

- Yahweh should be feared, and people should have hope in his grace (Ps. 147:10-11). People should not depend on material resources, but on Yahweh. Yahweh is the provider of all material things.

The roles of Yahweh are described in Psalm 33 as creator and redeemer (Craigie 2004:275). The roles of Yahweh become evident in the application of the *word* of Yahweh (Botha & Potgieter 2010:7). Yahweh created by his word, and he redeems his people through his word (Botha & Potgieter 2010:5-7). His word and work are representing himself (Keck et al. 1996:810). The words spoken by Yahweh are an important part of the metaphorical characterisation of him (Brown 2002:181). The breath of Yahweh emphasises his ability to create and restore life, while death is the absence of breath (Ps. 104:29-30; Brown 2002:181). He is the God of all people, since the world is full of his grace. He is the source of life. His words evoke respect, praise, and obedience from all people (Brown 2002:181). The roles of Yahweh are not limited to Israel only. Psalm 33 has a universalistic perspective on the application of the roles of Yahweh. Yahweh is the creator of the whole world, and also the redeemer of the whole world. Smal (1956:73) suggests the author(s) of Psalm 33 emphasises the monotheistic character of God by describing how he creates with his word.

The word of Yahweh represents the means by which God acts and the people's response to it, is to fear (v. 18), to wait (v. 20), to trust (v. 21), and to hope (v. 22; Brueggemann & Bellinger 2014:166). Psalm 33 suggests that Yahweh's word and works are similar to the Torah, because all of it is "truthfully, justly, and faithfully" (Jacobson 2008:110). The word of Yahweh is described as יָשָׁר (just) to emphasise the dependability of Yahweh's creating works (Keel 1997:204).

The word of Yahweh that is associated with justice, faithfulness, righteousness, and grace (vv. 4-5) is now creating in verses 6-9 (Jacobson 2008:110). The connection between the word of Yahweh and the Torah suggests a metaphorical use of the Torah as creator (Jacobson 2008:111). The fear that the people of the earth experience (v. 8) is equal to obedience to the Torah (Jacobson 2008:112). The expressions *said and it happened* and *commanded and it stood* are normally

associated with the Torah (Isa. 45:23; 48:13; Ps 147:15-20; 148:5-6; Jacobson 2008:112). This connection between the word of Yahweh and the Torah implies that the people of the earth will obey and fear him in the same way, that the world does during creation (Jacobson 2008:112). Everyone who remembers what Yahweh did for the Israelites at the Jordan River will fear him (Josh. 4:24) is similarly used in Psalm 33:8 where it is stated that all the people of the earth will fear Yahweh (Botha & Potgieter 2010:5).

It is relevant for this study to get an idea how the readers of the *Psalter* understood how creation fits together. Cosmology of the ancient Near East according to Keel (1997:36-56) comprises the following aspects:

- The cosmos consists of land, heaven, and sea (Pss. 8:7-8; 33:6-8; 36:5-6; 69:34; 96:11; 104:1-2; 135:6; 146:6; Keel 1997:35).
- The earth stands on pillars and is surrounded by the primeval ocean (תְּהוֹם), which surrounds the pillars (Keel 1997:35, 57). Sheol is under the surface of the earth (Keel 1997:39).
- Above the earth is the sphere of heaven where the sun, moon and stars are (Keel 1997:57).
- Above the sphere of heaven is the ocean of heaven. The ocean of heaven contains store houses of hail, clouds, wind, rain, fog and snow (Keel 1997:57). It is called ocean of heaven, because the sky and water have the same colour and water falls from it (Pss. 29:10; 104:13; 148:4; Keel 1997:36).
- Above the ocean of heaven is the upper heaven or heaven of fire (Keel 1997:57).

#### 5.4 Yahweh is sovereign (stanza 3: Psalm 33:10-12)

10 Yahweh destroyed the plan of the nations;

יְהוָה הִפְרִיר עֲצַת־גּוֹיִם<sup>10</sup>

he hindered the thoughts of the peoples.

הִנְיָא מִחֻשְׁבוֹת עַמִּים:

11 The advice of Yahweh will stand for all time;

עֲצַת יְהוָה לְעוֹלָם תַּעֲמֹד<sup>11</sup>

the intentions of his heart from generation to generation.

מִחֻשְׁבוֹת לְבוֹ לְדוֹרוֹדָר:

12 Blessed is the nation that Yahweh is his God;

אַשְׁרֵי הַגּוֹי אֲשֶׁר־יְהוָה אֱלֹהָיו<sup>12</sup>

the people he elected for his inheritance.

הָעָם | בְּחַרְלִבְחֵלָה לְיְיָ:

#### 5.4.1 Plans of the people versus advice of Yahweh

Verses 10-12 display contrast between the plans of people and the advice of Yahweh. The Lord destroys the plans of nations, but his advice will stand forever. The plans of nations are reference to foreign countries who oppose Israel (v. 10; Clifford 2002:171). The purpose of creation theology for Israel is not to study the origin of the world, but to describe Yahweh as sovereign over the history of the world. "Creation theology deals with the world in its relationship to God; the creator controls the sphere within which history develops" (Craigie 2004:275). The nations may have their own plans, but the sovereignty of Yahweh determines the outcome of these plans (Mays 1994:150).

There is movement in Psalm 33 from creation by the word of Yahweh (v. 6) to the advice of Yahweh that determines the history of all people (vv. 10-12; Craigie 2004:273). Yahweh not only creates the world and all the people, but he also decides what happens in the lives of people. The advancement of praise of Yahweh as creator to managing the history of all people is most important to Israel's theology (Craigie 2004:274). Yahweh is not only the God of Israel, but he determines what happens in the lives of non-Jews too. Israel's theology, thus, has a universalistic element that Yahweh is God of all. Grogan (2008:87) suggests that the nations, who are frustrated by Yahweh, alludes at Psalm 2 where the plans of the nations are disappointed, and the tower of Babel event (Gen. 11).

The history of the world consists of events that are determined by the intention of Yahweh's heart (v. 11). The intention of Yahweh's heart is to save the nation he chose, and the people of the world (Keil & Delitzsch 1973:404). He uses his knowledge of seeing all things (vv. 13-15) to submit everything under his control for the purpose of redemption (Keil & Delitzsch 1973:404). Psalm 33:5 testifies that the earth is full of the grace of Yahweh.

#### 5.4.2 Israel and the other nations

Israel as the nation of Yahweh's inheritance (v. 12) is paralleled with Jerusalem as the mountain of inheritance in Exodus 15:17 (Botha & Potgieter 2010:6). The inheritance of Yahweh is the nation Israel and not a country (Pss. 33:12; 68:9; 74:2; 78:62, 71; 106:5; Schaefer 2001:82). Israel as the chosen people that Yahweh selected for his inheritance (v. 12) is contrasted with the other nations, whose plans are destroyed (v. 10; Clifford 2002:171). *Inheritance of Yahweh* is synonymous to his *special possession*, which is in accordance with the original covenant (Ex. 19:5; Deut. 4:20; 9:26, 29; Briggs & Briggs 1969:289). The good fortune of his *special possession* is contrasted with the destroyed plans of the other nations (Briggs & Briggs 1969:289).

Yahweh's stance towards the people of the earth is not equal. He causes the downfall of some (v. 10), while others he maintains (v. 12; Terrien 2003:298). The foreign nations and their kings in the Psalms are enemies of Israel and opposing forces to the kingship of Yahweh (Wittman 2014:67). Psalm 33:10 exhibits this negative outlook when Yahweh destroys the plans of the nations (Wittman 2014:56). The assertion of the kingship of Yahweh is motivated by political resistance against the rule of foreign nations over Israel (Wittman 2014:66). For Yahweh to destroy the plans of the nations is an affirmation that the world is governed by him and not by people (Clifford 2002:170-171).

In verse 12 it is said that the nation, whom God selected, is blessed, but Israel is not mentioned here. It is presupposed that the text refers to Israel, since they are the chosen nation. Yahweh chose Israel to be his people, and because of this they are regarded as righteous and upright (Ps. 33:1; see Clifford 2002:170). They are called so because of the acts of Yahweh, and not because of their own deeds (Clifford 2002:170). According to Terrien (2003:299) Psalm 33:12 hints in the direction that the election of Israel as the people of Yahweh plays a role in the future of the other nations. The sovereignty of Yahweh over all nations implies possible redemption for non-Israelites, for those who fear Yahweh" (Terrien 2003:300). "Israel has the task of telling Yahweh's deeds and miracles among the peoples and bearing witness to them" (Ps 9:11; 96:3; 105:1; Kraus 1986:59). The redemption that Yahweh offers, is not only limited to Israel. Other nations may too experience the benefits like the

chosen nation. Israel's point of view in Psalm 33 develops from *us* as a nation to *us* as the community of the world.

The special relationship between Yahweh and Israel as described in the *Psalter*, according to Smal (1956:206-207):

- Yahweh is the creator and owner of Israel. They are the object of his love (Ps. 100:3).
- Yahweh is the creator and king of Israel (Ps. 149:2).
- Yahweh is pleased with Israel and he offers them salvation (Pss. 149:4; 96:2; 98:2).
- Yahweh wants to avenge the blood of Israel spilt by their enemies (Ps. 9:13).
- Yahweh presented himself as helper to Israel in their times of need (Ps. 46:2).
- Yahweh submits foreign nations under the rule of Israel (Ps. 47:4).
- Yahweh saved Israel with a strong arm from Egypt (Pss. 77:16; 66:6; 135:8-9).
- Yahweh led Israel like a herd to the promised land by using Moses and Aaron (Ps. 77:21).
- Yahweh gave Canaan to the Israelites, and by doing so he defeated nations and kings (Ps. 135:10-12).
- The loving-kindness and faithfulness that Yahweh sworn to his people became reality (Ps. 98:3).
- Yahweh makes sure that no injustice is done to his chosen people (Ps. 99:4).
- Yahweh reconciles the sins of his people (Ps. 65:4).
- Yahweh listens to the petitions of Israel when they were in exile. He gathers them and takes away their pain (Pss. 102:18; 147:2-3).

Psalm 33:12 reads that the nation whom Yahweh chooses for his inheritance is *blessed* (אַשְׁרֵי). McCann (2005:340-346) describes the meaning of *blessedness* in the *Psalter* as follows:

- To be blessed (אַשְׁרֵי) may be translated with *happiness*. Verse 12, thus, reads that the nation that Yahweh chooses for his inheritance is *happy*.
- There are 25 expressions of blessedness in the *Psalter*, of which 8 are in Book I: Psalms 1:1-2; 2:12; 32:1; 32:2; 33:12; 34:9; 40:5; 41:2. The first and last beatitudes form an *inclusio* whereby the first book is framed, and all the psalms in between are explaining the meaning of blessedness (אַשְׁרֵי). The first seven beatitudes are expressions of a person's relationship with God, and the last one is an expression of blessedness of a person who assists other people in need. A person is thus blessed if he / she expresses love for God and other people. God is dedicated to the people he supports, namely the weak, needy, poor, afflicted, humble, and oppressed. A person is not only blessed because he / she considers the needs of the poor, but he / she is blessed because they have the same character as God. The beatitudes in Books II to V are repeating the meaning of blessedness found in Book I.
- The beatitudes in Psalm 1:1-2: *blessed is the person that finds pleasure in the law of Yahweh*, and Psalm 2:12: *blessed is the person that seeks refuge in Yahweh* form the foundation for the *Psalter's* understanding of blessedness. Blessedness has to do with a person's total focus on God.
- Most of the psalms in Book I give another picture as stated in the first two psalms. It does not go well with the righteous people. They fear for their lives, they are chased, ill treated, sick and poor. It goes well with the wicked people on the other hand. They are rich, healthy and confident. Blessedness (אַשְׁרֵי) therefore has to be interpreted as eschatological, and not material in nature, according to McCann.
- Blessedness is in essence *trust in God* (Pss. 32:10, 11; 33:1, 21; 34:9, 20; 40:5). Trust in God is affirmed by the fact that he forgives sins (Ps. 32:1-2), and that he took initiative to choose his people (Ps. 33:12).

Psalm 33 consists of a blend of particularisms and universalisms (Smal 1956:72). Israel is the chosen nation, but yet the earth is full of the grace of Yahweh.

## 5.5 Yahweh redeems (stanza 4: Psalm 33:13-19)

13 Yahweh looked from heavens; he saw all the sons of man.	מִשָּׁמַיִם הִבִּיט יְהוָה <sup>13</sup> רָאָה אֶת-כָּל-בְּנֵי הָאָדָם:
14 From his dwelling place he stared; at all the dwellers of the earth.	מִמְּכוֹן-שִׁבְתּוֹ הִשְׁגִּיחַ <sup>14</sup> אֶל כָּל-יְשֵׁבֵי הָאָרֶץ:
15 The creator of all their hearts; he notices all their works.	הֵי יֵצֵר יַחַד לָבָם <sup>15</sup> הַמְבִיחַ אֶל-כָּל-מַעֲשֵׂיהֶם:
16 No king can be victorious with a great army; a hero cannot save himself with great strength.	אֵין-הַמֶּלֶךְ נוֹשָׁע בְּרַב-חַיִל <sup>16</sup> גִּבּוֹר לֹא-יִנְצֵל בְּרַב-כֹּחַ:
17 It is a lie that the horse establishes redemption; and by his great power he shall not save.	יִשְׁקֵר הַסּוֹס לְתַשׁוּעָה <sup>17</sup> וּבְרַב חֵילוֹ לֹא יִמְלֹט:
18 Behold, the eye of Yahweh is toward the fearful; to those waiting for his grace.	הִנֵּה עֵינֵי יְהוָה אֶל-יִרְאַיִו <sup>18</sup> לְמַיְחָלִים לְחַסְדּוֹ:
19 To rescue their life from death; and to keep them alive in hunger.	לְהַצִּיל מִמּוֹת נַפְשָׁם <sup>19</sup> וּלְחַיּוֹתָם בְּרָעָב:

### 5.5.1 Creator of all their hearts

The people are born from Yahweh in Psalm 33:15, because he is the creator of their inner beings / hearts. The event where God hardened the heart of Pharaoh to not let his people go may be implied with the reference to 'hearts', to demonstrate God's power of creating and directing people. The creation of people by Yahweh may have its origin in the birth narrative of the Egyptian king, as the deity himself brings forth the king, while goddesses breastfeed him (Keel 1997: 201). Thus, a mythological allusion.

### 5.5.2 Yahweh looks at the people

Verses 13 to 19 begin and end with Yahweh looking at the people of the world (cf. Ps. 2:4; Deut. 26:15). Five words describe how Yahweh looks at the people: look (רָאָה), see (רָאָה), stare (הִשְׁגִּיחַ), notice (הַמְבִיחַ), and his eye (עֵינֵי) is on them (Ps. 33:13-15, 18; Schaefer 2001:82). Schaefer (2001:82) suggests that the fivefold use of Yahweh

looking may allude to the five books of the Torah. Jacobson (2014:316) has the following to say about the way that Yahweh looks at the people: he differs from Schaefer. According to him there are only 4 words that describe how Yahweh looks at the people. Jacobson (2014:316) only considers the verbs that describe how Yahweh looks at the people, and not the noun of his eye that is on them. This study suggests that the eye of Yahweh, which is on the people, must also be considered as an action together with the other verbs describing the ways how Yahweh observes. This study did not come across any other scholar, than Schaefer, who connects the actions of Yahweh observing the people with the Torah. This study agrees with Schaefer that the five words describe Yahweh looking at the people, may symbolise the Torah, because it may provide the motive with which Yahweh looks at the people. The motive is then with covenantal intention of redeeming the people.

The *Psalter* anthropomorphically and metaphorically assigns the human sense of sight to God in order to emphasise his insight in the state of affairs of human beings, and to commit himself to correct damages that were done (vv. 13-14; Brown 2002:169-170). Yahweh is praised for his ability to see and to have knowledge of everything (Craigie 2004:274). 'See' also means he does something: redeems / saves.

Mays (1994:150) says the following about God looking down from heaven: "The Lord is God over human beings (Ps. 33:13-15). He created their minds and understands what they do. From the vantage of the heavenly throne he sees all human beings, a mythopoeic way of saying that the consciousness of the Lord comprehends every person (Pss. 11:4; 14:2; 102:20). In other texts, this all-knowing surveillance by God implies accountability, warning, and comfort. Here it is stated simply as a fact of the godship of the Lord. The Lord is praised as the one to whom our lives are ever present."

God's position of looking down on the world (v. 13) and staring at the people also affirms his sovereignty (Clifford 2002:171). The sense of sight that is assigned to God affirms his sovereignty to have moral insight, because he searches by looking at and testing the righteous and the wicked (Ps. 14:2; Brown 2002:172). A distance

between the people of the earth and Yahweh is created in verse 13 where Yahweh looks from heaven, because he judges the people of the world (Terrien 2003:299). He judges the people of the earth, because to stand in a relationship with him requires high ethical standard and faithfulness (Terrien 2003:299). Yahweh created every human heart (v. 15) (לֵב). Therefore he qualifies to judge or save them (Kraus 1988:378). Only Yahweh has knowledge of the heart (לֵב) of a person; he knows a person better than they know themselves (Kraus 1986:145). The heart (לֵב) is the core of human existence. Thought processes and emotions are experienced there (Pss. 4:4; 10:6; 15:2; Kraus 1986:145).

Brueggemann (1984:35) suggests that Yahweh's looking down also displays concern for the people. In verse 13 Yahweh looks at the people, but in verse 19 he gives special consideration to those who fear him (cf. Deut. 11:22; Brueggemann 1984:35). "God keeps special watch on chosen Israel, those that fear him, so nothing adverse happens to them" (Schaefer 2001:82). Psalm 33 moves from general to specific - the whole world was created by God, but also the individual person (v. 15; Broyles 1999:166). Every person in the world is known by God, because he created them (v. 15; Mays 1994:150).

"The divine eye has a dual significance. On the one hand, it judges human pretence and grandiosity; on the other, it graciously bestows blessings and invites humans into a relationship like that of servant Lord: attending, receiving help and protection (Ps. 33:20) – and yet something more, gladdening the heart, trusting in his name, receiving the blessings that flows from God's steadfast love" (Ps. 33:21-22; Clifford 2002:172).

Allen et al. (1971:236-237) says the following about Yahweh observing the people:

- Yahweh is the all-knowing and all-seeing God that is involved in the lives of all people.
- The structure of the psalm places Yahweh's observation of the people in the context of: Yahweh frustrates the nations; Yahweh's counsel that will stand forever; blessed is the nation that is chosen; victory is not secured

by military resources; Yahweh redeems people from death and famine; hope in his grace; and fear for Yahweh.

It is not only the people of Israel who are regarded as faithful and just, but the eye of Yahweh (v. 18) is on anyone who fears him (Terrien 2003:299). The universalistic character of grace (v. 5) is paralleled with any individual that fears Yahweh (v. 18). The psalm moves from a group that was chosen (v. 12) to the individual that fears Yahweh (v. 18; Terrien 2003:299).

### **5.5.3 Redemption not by a king, hero or horse**

It is only Yahweh that can save a person from death or hunger (v. 19). Redemption does not come from a king, hero (v. 16) or a horse (v. 17). The worthlessness of reliance on military resources (vv. 16-17) is contrasted with the assistance Yahweh gives to those that fear him (v. 18; Mays 1994:151). The repetition of רב in *great army*, *great strength*, and *great power* is to emphasise the worthlessness of trusting in military resources (Schaefer 2001:82).

Redemption cannot come from a king, hero or a horse:

- This statement may be interpreted that nothing takes place without Yahweh allowing it. The king was only victorious if Yahweh allowed it (cf. Prov. 21:31; Keil & Delitzsch 1973:404-405).
- Redemption can be interpreted as life, and life is God's gift and not achievement by people (Keck et al. 1996:810).
- This statement alludes to Isaiah 45:20-25, where it states that redemption only comes from God (Mays 1994:151).
- Furthermore, it might refer to Deuteronomy 17:16 where the king is advised not to gather horses for the war, but to trust in the Lord (Grogan 2008:87).

In verses 16-19 the psalm uses the Song of the Sea (Ex. 15) and the Song of Deborah (Judg. 5) as references for the fact that Yahweh determines the history of humankind, and not a king, hero, or a horse (Craigie 2004:274). The psalm differs from Exodus 15's frame of reference: Yahweh's dwelling place is in heaven (v. 13),

and not in a sanctuary on a mountain (Ex. 15:17); his inheritance is his people Israel (v. 12), and not the mountain country (Ex. 15:17; Botha & Potgieter 2010:6).

#### 5.5.4 Redemption in their history

The people, who acknowledge Yahweh's lordship, wait for him and they who put their trust in him will benefit by the fact that he has control over their hardship (Botha & Potgieter 2010:7). God's word of redemption is expected to materialise in the history of his people (Botha & Potgieter 2010:7; Terrien 2003:297).

#### 5.6 Hope in Yahweh (stanza 5: Psalm 33:20-22)

20 Our soul waits for Yahweh;

עֲזָרָנוּ וּמִגִּנְנוּ לַיהוָה<sup>20</sup>

he is our helper and refuge.

עֲזָרָנוּ וּמִגִּנְנוּ הוּא:

21 Because in him our heart shall rejoice;

כִּי־בֹ יִשְׂמַח לִבֵּנוּ<sup>21</sup>

because we trusted in his holy name.

כִּי בָשֵׁם קֹדְשׁוֹ בָטַחְנוּ:

22 Let your grace be on us, Yahweh;

יְהִי־חַסְדְּךָ יְהוָה עָלֵינוּ<sup>22</sup>

as though you make us hope in you.

כְּאֲשֶׁר יַחְלֵנוּ לָךְ:

##### 5.6.1 Hope (יְחֵל) in Yahweh

Verses 20-22 conclude the psalm by confessions of hope and trust in Yahweh as their helper and refuge, with a concluding prayer: Let your grace be on us, as though you make us hope in you (v. 22). “The psalmist prays that the grace of Yahweh may be with the faithful people and that their hope may be rewarded” (Schaefer 2001:82). *Hope* and *trust* are words associated with the presence of God (Kraus 1988:379). The sovereignty of Yahweh is emphasised by the hope that the readers have in him, because of the expression *you make us hope* (v. 22). The psalm reflects on the consequences of praising Yahweh's character and works, by waiting, trusting, and hoping (Craigie 2004:275). The essence of confessions of hope reflects not a giving-receiving relationship, but rather a close relationship with God (Terrien 2003:299-300).

### 5.6.2 Grace (חַסֵּד) of Yahweh

The psalm is framed by grace (חַסֵּד) in verses 5 and 22. Only in this psalm and Psalm 119:64 it states that the earth is full of the grace of Yahweh (Jacobson 2008:110). The grace of Yahweh is the central theme of the psalm: it fills the earth (v. 5); it saves his people (v. 18); and it is a fundamental part of the closing stanza (v. 22; Craigie 2004:275). The whole psalm is an explanation of the grace of Yahweh that fills the earth (Keck et al. 1996:809). The grace of Yahweh that fills the earth is an indication that he is God over all the people and the whole universe (Mays 1994:149).

The fact that Psalm 33 and Psalm 119 (Torah Psalm) share the same statement of grace (חַסֵּד) reflects Psalm 33's close relationship to the wisdom tradition (Jacobson 2008:110). The grace of Yahweh is for this psalm in a close relationship with righteousness and justice (Jacobson 2008:110). Verses 4 and 5 are combined by the use of merisms: grace and faithfulness (v. 4); righteousness and justice (v. 5; Jacobson 2008:110). God's love extends to principles, he loves righteousness (Pss. 33:5; 45:7) and justice (Pss. 33:5; 37:28; Brown 2002:183). His love for the principles righteousness and justice has its origin in his grace, which saves and sustains in the covenant (Brown 2002:183).

Grace (חַסֵּד) is a characteristic of the covenant between God and Israel (Terrien 2003:298). Grace (חַסֵּד) describes Yahweh's commitment to Israel as covenant people (Grogan 2008:253). His grace is applied to material blessing in the way that he protects and preserves his people (Pss. 33:19; 119; Kraus 1988:378).

Grace (חַסֵּד) has a universal element in Psalm 33:5 (cf. Ps. 119:64), because the earth is full of the grace of God. The covenantal element of grace is now extended to all the people of the earth, affirming God's sovereignty over all the earth (cf. Jonah 4:2; Allen et al. 1987:78-79). This universal interpretation of grace views Israel not as the chosen people, but as part of the human race (Allen et al. 1987:79).

The people of God are described in the *Psalter* as those who hope in his grace (Ps 33:18; 147:11; Allen et al. 1987:103). The people's hope in Yahweh's grace and him

saving them from tough realities of human life, is a reflection on the covenant where God commits to his people and they commit to him (Allen et al. 1987:103). God committed him first to Israel to assist them in time of trouble. Therefore they should have great trust in him (Pss. 13:5; 52:8; Kraus 1986:44-45).

## 5.7 Synthesis

The detail analysis of Psalm 33 was done according to the structure that was suggested for the psalm in this study: stanza 1, instruction to praise Yahweh (vv. 1-5); stanza 2, Yahweh created (vv. 6-9); stanza 3, Yahweh is sovereign (vv. 10-12); stanza 4, Yahweh redeems (vv. 13-19); and stanza 5, hope in Yahweh (vv. 20-22).

The righteous people are instructed to praise Yahweh (vv. 1-3), using the phrases: shout with joy; praise with a lyre; praise with a ten stringed instrument; sing a new song; and shout with joy. The reasons for these instructions are (vv. 4-5): The word of Yahweh is just; Yahweh's work is done in faithfulness; Yahweh loves righteousness and justice; and the earth is full of the grace of Yahweh.

The instructions to praise Yahweh in the first 5 verses of Psalm 33 are a response to Psalm 32:11 that instruct the people to praise Yahweh after forgiveness is received. The special relationship between the 2 psalms may be emphasised by not giving Psalm 33 a heading.

The *righteous* who are instructed to praise Yahweh may be defined as the following:

- The righteous are the poor and afflicted people who depend on Yahweh (Pss. 9:13; 143), and are oppressed by the wicked people (Pss. 9:10; 34:7).
- The righteous experience: forgiveness of sins (Ps. 38:18); redemption (Ps. 33:7); saved from death and famine (Ps. 33:19); Yahweh takes action against the wicked people on their behalf (Ps. 33:10); it will go well with them, and they will not be overpowered by the enemy.
- Righteousness is based on divine election and grace (Deut. 7:8). The fear that the righteous people show towards God is a result of a relationship built on appreciation, respect, and reverence.

Psalm 33:21 confesses that they trust in the name of Yahweh. The name of Yahweh represents his life, identity, righteousness, sovereignty, and his presence. The word *Yahweh* dominates Psalm 33, as it appears 13 times. This may be an illustration that Yahweh dominates the world in the same way.

The 'new song' refers to new works that Yahweh will do for the chosen nation as predetermined by the order that he has put in place (Ps. 33:3).

It was the intention of the author(s) of Psalm 33 to establish a link between Yahweh's acts of creation and redemption. In the same way that Yahweh created with the wind of his word (Gen. 1:2), he also redeemed his people during the *exodus* event by blowing over the water (Ex 15:8; Josh. 3:13). The *exodus* event serves as paradigm for Israel's expectation of future redemption. They are fully dependent on Yahweh.

Parallelism and a merism are established between the different types of oceans in Psalm 33:7 (יםִי heavenly ocean; תְּהוֹם primeval ocean) to emphasise that God created all waters and have power over it all.

The *Psalter's* reference to creation is not to give an account how creation came into existence but to reflect on creation and the way that God manages history as a display of his faithfulness. Yahweh created and redeem through his grace. This emphasises his monotheistic character, because everything happens only through Yahweh.

Yahweh sustains the whole world:

- All life came from Yahweh, and he sustains it all (Pss. 36:10; 104:29-30).
- Yahweh gives gifts to all people, and not only Israel. He allows every person to govern his life (Ps. 8:7).
- Yahweh's compassion is not only limited to Israel but it is on all his works (Ps. 145:9). All living beings are the objects of his care (Ps 33:5).
- Yahweh should be feared, and people should hope in his grace (Ps. 147:10-11). People should not depend on material resources, but on Yahweh. Yahweh is the provider of all material things.

The word of Yahweh invokes the following responses of people: to fear (v. 18), to wait (v. 20), to trust (v. 21), and to hope. Yahweh's word and works are similar to the Torah, because all of it is "truthfully, justly, and faithfully" (Jacobson 2008:110). The expressions *said and it happened* and *commanded and it stood* are normally associated with the Torah (Isa. 45:23; 48:13; Ps 147:15-20; 148:5-6).

Yahweh is described as sovereign in stanza 3 (vv. 10-12). Yahweh destroys the plans of the nations, who opposes Israel and his advice will stand forever. There is movement in Psalm 33 from creation by the word of Yahweh (v. 6) to the advice of Yahweh creates the world and all the people, and he decides what happens in their lives (vv. 10-12). Israel's theology thus has a universalistic element that Yahweh is God of all. Yahweh's plan is to save the nation he chose for his inheritance (Ps. 33:12; Ex. 19:5; Deut. 4:20; 9:26, 29), Israel, and then the people of the world (v. 11). Yahweh uses Israel as witness to tell other nations of his good deeds (Pss. 9:11; 96:3; 105:1). He uses his knowledge of seeing all things (vv. 13-15) to submit everything under his control for the purpose of redemption.

Israel is *blessed* (אַשְׁרֵי) as the chosen nation (Ps. 33:12). God is dedicated to the weak, needy, poor, afflicted, humble, and oppressed. Blessedness is in essence *trust in God* (Pss. 32:10, 11; 33:1, 21; 34:9, 20; 40:5). Trust in God is affirmed by the way that he forgives sins (Ps. 32:1-2).

The *Psalter* anthropomorphically and metaphorically assigns the human sense of sight to God in order to emphasise his insight in the state of affairs of human beings, and to commit himself to correct damages that were done (vv. 13-14; Brown 2002:169-170). Yahweh is praised for his ability to see and to have knowledge of everything (Craigie 2004:274). 'See' also means he does something: redeems / saves.

Verses 13-19 (stanza 4) begin and end with Yahweh looking at the people of the world: look (נִבְטֵ), see (רָאָה), stare (שָׁגַח), notice (בִּיַן), and the eye of Yahweh (עֵינַי). The *Psalter* anthropomorphically and metaphorically assigns the human sense of

sight to God in order to emphasise his insight in the state of affairs of human beings (vv. 13-14). Yahweh is sovereign and knows everything. Yahweh takes note of the suffering of the people and he is prepared to redeem them.

It is only Yahweh that can save a person from death or hunger (v. 19), it is worthless to rely on military resources (vv. 16-17). In verses 16-19 the psalm uses the Song of the Sea (Ex. 15) and the Song of Deborah (Judg. 5) as references for the fact that Yahweh determines the history of humankind

Stanza 5 (vv. 20-22) concludes Psalm 33 by confessions of hope and trust in Yahweh as their helper and refuge. *Hope* and *trust* are words associated with the presence and sovereignty of Yahweh. The essence of confessions of hope reflects not a giving-receiving relationship but rather a close relationship with God.

The psalm is framed by two appearances of grace (חֲסֶד) in verses 5 and 22. The grace of Yahweh is the central theme of the psalm: it fills the earth (v. 5); it saves his people (v. 18); and it is a fundamental part of the closing stanza (v. 22). The whole psalm is a commentary of the grace of Yahweh.

Psalm 33 and Psalm 119 (Torah Psalm) share the same statement of grace (חֲסֶד) and thus confirms Psalm 33's Wisdom influence. Grace, righteousness and justice are placed in relation to one another in Psalm 33:4-5, by the use of merisms: grace and faithfulness (v. 4); righteousness and justice (v. 5). God's love is extended to the principles: love for righteousness (Pss. 33:5; 45:7) and justice (Pss. 33:5; 37:28). Righteousness and justice has its origin in grace, which describes Yahweh's commitment to his people, by redeeming and sustaining them in the covenantal relationship.

*Grace* (חֲסֶד) has a universal element in Psalm 33:5 (cf. Ps. 119:64), because the earth is full of the grace of God. The covenantal element of grace is now extended to all the people of the earth, affirming God's sovereignty over all the earth (cf. Jonah 4:2). This universal interpretation of grace views Israel not as the chosen people but as part of the human race.

## Chapter 6: Theology of Psalm 33

### 6.1 Introduction

Craigie (2004:275) gives an overview of the theological themes of Psalm 33 that are interdependent on each other:

- “In Psalm 33, there are integrated some of the most basic themes of Hebrew theology: creation, history, covenant, and the human response of worship.” These themes are interdependent on each other in Hebrew religion.
- “Creation doctrine deals with the world in its relationship to God, to human history, and to individual human beings.” God as creator determines everything that happens in history.
- “The covenant, which is at the heart of Hebrew religion, presupposes God’s roles both as creator and as sovereign in human history.” The grace of God is central to the psalm: His grace fills the earth (v. 5); the Lord redeems his people through grace (v. 18); and grace is pertinent in the concluding prayer (v. 22).

Broyles (1999:165) makes the following comments concerning the theology of Psalm 33:

- The psalm consists of the following theological themes: righteousness; creation; Yahweh’s sovereignty; and hope. The repetition of words bring these themes together to form a distinct message.
- The psalm makes theological claims about Yahweh, and expose what Yahweh expect from humankind. Yahweh will save people from death and hunger, but they have to fear him and hope in his grace.

Keck et al. (1996:809, 811) comments on the purpose of Psalm 33:

- The purpose of Psalm 33 is to portray Yahweh as sovereign over all, therefore the application of 22 lines that is the same number as Hebrew alphabet letters (Keck et al. 1996:809).
- Yahweh is sovereign over all creation, humanity, people in power, and those that trust in his grace (Keck et al. 1996:809).

- Psalm 33 calls upon all the people of the world to trust only Yahweh, not political power, military resources, and human wisdom. God is sovereign over all the earth, and all the people's existence depends on his grace (Keck et al. 1996:811).

Psalm 33 consists of the most common Hebrew theological elements like creation, history, and covenant. The grace (חַסֵּד) of Yahweh that fills the earth is the central statement of Psalm 33, and the rest of the psalm is a commentary of this (Keck et al. 1996:809). It can thus be said that Yahweh created through his grace, and manages history through his grace. Every theological theme of Psalm 33 gives thus a unique dimension on the grace of Yahweh.

The most obvious attribute of Psalm 33 is that it describes the sovereignty of Yahweh by negotiating a link between his acts of creation and redemption (Botha & Potgieter 2010:1). This study approaches, thus, the theology of the psalm from the perspective of the sovereignty of Yahweh. The following theological themes of Psalm 33 are displayed: Yahweh is sovereign over creation; Yahweh is sovereign over history; the meaning of righteousness for the psalm; and the faithfulness of Yahweh, where his grace is the central element.

## 6.2 Yahweh is sovereign over creation

Weiser (1962:291-292) says the following about God's creative acts in Psalm 33:6-9:

- The god of the Babylonians fought against and tamed the monster of the primeval sea. However, the sovereignty of Yahweh is more supreme.
- All things are made by God by speaking a word, and therefore he should be feared.
- The word of God judges and saves.

Jacobson (2008:107-120) says the following about the creation rhetoric of Psalm 33:

- "Psalm 33 is a logically constructed hymn in which the specific metaphor of creation by divine word plays a central role (Jacobson 2008:108)."
- There is movement from the *word* (דְּבַר) of God to the *work* (מַעֲשֵׂה) of God in verse 4. "Just as Yahweh's word has a vast expanse of potential connections,

so also does God's work. In the book of Psalms, work refers to the whole or parts of God's creation, to humans as created, or to divine activity in history. God's work, like God's word, makes sense and is not random. The intimate connection between word and action continues in the description of both creation and history. The true uprightness of God's word made manifest in the true faithfulness of God's work" (Jacobson 2008:109).

Clifford (2002:172) describes the sovereignty of God in Psalm 33 in terms of the face of God that dominates the psalm:

- God creates by words coming from his mouth.
- God's eyes stares from heaven at the people of the world to judge and manage them.

Psalm 33 praises God as the creator. Psalm 33:6-9 describes how God created everything. He spoke a word and all things were created. God should be feared for demonstrating sovereignty over creation (Ps. 33:8). The reality of God is that his word creates, judges, saves and manages history. The *word* and *work* of God are placed in parallel statements in Psalm 33:4 and are word pairs. God's word and work describes acts of creation and management of history (Jacobson 2008:109). "The true uprightness of God's word made manifest in the true faithfulness of God's work" (Jacobson 2008:109). God's face dominates the psalm as he creates with words from his mouth and as he looks from heaven (Clifford 2002:172). God's face that dominates the psalm, demonstrates how he is sovereign over creation and the history of all people.

The sovereignty of Yahweh is displayed in his acts of creation (Brueggemann 1984:34). He created the earth by confining the water of the sea (v. 7; Jacobson 2008:112). The Psalm writer applies the sovereignty of Yahweh's creative power to his sovereignty to redeem his people, by giving ambiguous meaning to *water*. On the one side *water* refers to the process of creation, and on the other side it refers to the redemptive act of *exodus*, and entrance into Canaan (Lohfink & Zenger 2000:92). He also created the heavens and all their hosts according to verse 6 as quoted from

Genesis 2:1 (Botha & Potgieter 2010:5). Yahweh is sovereign over creation as displayed by the obedience of all natural elements to his verbal instructions.

Yahweh should be respected for his sovereignty by creating through his word. People should fear him, because he created by speaking a word (Jacobson 2008:112). *He spoke and it happened* (v. 33:9a), as quoted from the creation narrative in Genesis 1 (Brueggemann & Bellinger 2014:166). In Genesis 1 God created when he spoke (to say; אָמַר) but in Psalm 33 he created with a word (דְּבַר) that was spoken. The usage of the *word* that created may be to include the full reality of God, by creating, saving, and managing history through his word. Yahweh reveals Himself by the application of his *word*, by creating with it and redeems people by it (Botha & Potgieter 2010:5-7). Yahweh's word is just (יָשָׁר), his acts of creation are thus reliable (Keel 1997:204). The word of Yahweh is equal to the Torah, because both are described as just, faithful, righteous and graceful (vv. 4-5; Jacobson 2008:110). Yahweh revealed his sovereignty by his reliable word, by his Torah bringing everything to existence.

### 6.3 Yahweh is sovereign over history

Psalm 33 demonstrates the sovereignty of Yahweh over the history of the world in the following ways: Yahweh knows everything; the advice of Yahweh determines history; and Yahweh is at liberty to redeem other nations than Israel also.

#### 6.3.1 Yahweh knows everything

Jacobson (2014:316-317) makes the following remarks concerning the fact that Yahweh knows everything:

- In Psalm 33:13-15 four words and statements are used to emphasise that Yahweh knows what is going on in the lives of people: look (רָאָה), see (בִּיַן), stare (שָׁגַח), and notice (בִּיַן).
- “This fourfold confession of God’s ability to know and see that which happens both on the earth and in the human heart is characteristic of the faithful in the Psalms. The wicked are those who say that God does not see (Pss. 94:7; 10:10) or doubt that God can hear (Ps. 59:7). In Psalm 33, the characteristic confession of trust in God’s knowledge and discernment

is emphatic – it is repeated, with staccato confidence, in four parallel statements. Altogether, the four statements emphatically underscore the thoroughgoing, universal, and complete nature of the Lord’s seeing and knowing. The connection between God’s ongoing providential knowledge and God’s creative activity should not be missed – the one who discerns is no other than the one who forms. There is a seamless connection between God’s creative activity and God’s providential or guiding activity.”

Yahweh has knowledge of every person, because he has created their hearts (לֵב) (Ps. 33:15). Five words describe how Yahweh looks at the people: look (נָבַט), see (רָאָה), stare (שָׁגַח), notice (בִּיַן), and eye (עֵיִן) (Psalm 33:13-15, 18; Schaefer 2001:82). These words suggest that Yahweh is aware of everything that goes on in the lives of all people of the world. The righteous people acknowledge the ability of Yahweh to know everything, but the wicked people say that he sees nothing. These words that are placed in parallel statements emphasises that God knows everything in the same way that all the words are exhausted that describe observation. God may observe the people for various reasons:

- Yahweh may look at the people when committing himself to redeem them (Brown 2002:169-170). He may be concerned about the people.
- The way that Yahweh looks from heaven may be to emphasise his sovereignty, and the fact that he is God (Mays 1994:150).
- Yahweh may have moral insight into the inner beings of people, and separating the righteous and the wicked (Brown 2002:172). He may look at the people to judge them because a relationship with God demands a high ethical standard (Terrien 2003:299).
- Yahweh created the hearts of all the people, and he is therefore at liberty to decide whom he wants to save, and to judge the others. Thus when Yahweh looks at the people he also observes them as the judge of the world. “This universal office of judgement is according to verse 15 based on the fact that Yahweh has formed the hearts of all. There are similar statements in Psalm 94:9; 139:13; and Zechariah 12:1. The macrocosmic relation *creator and Lord of the world* is therefore in verses 13 to 15

transferred to the realm of the central human expressions of life: the creator of the heart is the Lord and judge of man” (Kraus 1988:378).

The text does not give us an indication with which motive Yahweh looks at the people, we can only speculate as the scholars did here. The word *grace* (חַסֵּד) forms an inclusio wrapping the psalm between the two graces of verse 5 and 22. It is suggested that the text inside the inclusio is a commentary on the meaning of grace. The motive of Yahweh when looking at the people is then to be concerned about their wellbeing, to guard over them, to see where he can take action on behalf of his people. It is true that a relationship with God demands a high level of ethics, and by mentioning that he is the creator of the inner beings of the people it may suggest the he is aware that the people fall short of the moral demands and offer his grace. At first Yahweh look at all the people of the world, but in verse 19 it is introduced with “behold” that his eye is on the people that fear him and wait for his grace. Yahweh observes thus all the people of the world but Psalm 33:18 emphasises that he gives special consideration to those that fear him.

### **6.3.2 Advice of Yahweh determines history**

Weiser (1962:292-293) comments on Psalm 33:10-12 and says the following about the advice of Yahweh:

- The advice of God determines the history of the world, and in faith Israel believes this when they are dominated by ancient kingdoms.
- Israel believes that the plans of the nations against them will come to nothing. It is only God’s plan that will materialise.
- “From this nation emerged that great vision of history which for the first time in the history of the world grasped and expressed the fact that the divine purpose inherent in everything which happens in the world is the meaning of history as a whole.”
- History must be understood from the perspective of God. Israel also understood their history from the perspective of God as the chosen people who will be saved by God.
- Psalm 33 testifies in a joyful way that Yahweh revealed himself to Israel as their God.

Jacobson (2008:119-120) observes the following concerning Yahweh, who manages the history of all people:

- Obedience to the instructions of Yahweh, by his word, is displayed when creation came into existence. Human beings are expected to be obedient in the same way. The instructions of Yahweh must be answered with obedience.
- God is in control of the universe, and this is evident in the response of obedience of creation and all the people. However, there are people who depend on their own military resources, than on Yahweh. By doing this, they remove themselves from the grace and sustenance of Yahweh.
- “Other people, however, respond to God’s word with fear, patience, trust, and obedience. These people experience divine grace. Such is the ongoing plan of God that those whom Yahweh has chosen respond as command. Divine providence and human response are held in tension, allowing the righteous community both to trust in Yahweh’s eternal word and to argue that their response merits divine care.”
- Jacobson (2008:120) concludes her article with this final statement about Yahweh managing history: “Psalm 33 does indeed make a rhetorical argument. Appeals to God’s creative activity reflect and engender obedient response to and dependence upon Yahweh.”

Yahweh’s acts of creation and managing history go hand in hand. With the same sovereignty that he created, he manages the lives of all people of the world. Israel holds on to this hope that Yahweh will liberate them from foreign rule one day (Weiser 1962:292-293). They hope to be restored since they are the chosen nation. Yahweh created with his word and manages the history of all people with his advice (עֲצָה). Psalm 33:11 testifies that the advice of Yahweh will stand forever and his intentions from generation to generation. Psalm 33 is confident that Yahweh will manage history in such a way that it will be to the advantage of his people.

The psalm author(s) observed the world as created by Yahweh, and everything that happened to all the people of the world is because of divine decision. Psalm 33 focuses on the word and advice of Yahweh that creates and manages history

(Brueggemann & Bellinger 2014:166). Grogan (2008:247) suggests that Yahweh's acts of creation cannot be separated from the fact that he manages the history of the world. Yahweh manages the world with the same power that he created the world with his word. Yahweh is sovereign of the world that he created with his word, and everything that happens in the world is because of his advice. Yahweh's word of redemption for Psalm 33 is not an eschatological event. For them the word of redemption materialise in their time (Terrien 2003:297). Yahweh foils the plans of the nations (Ps. 33:10); they will be saved from death and famine (Ps. 33:19); and Yahweh will decide the outcome of international politics and war (Ps. 33:16-17). The grace of Yahweh is not an abstract concept. Grace is real in the sense that Yahweh protects and preserves his people physically (Ps. 33:19; Kraus 1988).

#### **6.4 Righteousness**

The righteous people are instructed to praise Yahweh in Psalm 33:1. *Righteous* and *upright* are used in parallel statements suggesting that they are synonyms. *Righteousness* in Psalm 33 has a different meaning than *righteousness* in Psalm 32. In Psalm 32 *righteousness* is a condition of a person whose sins are forgiven by God through his grace (Vosloo & Van Rensburg 1999:628). The meaning of *righteousness* in Psalm 33 is displayed in this section. The meaning that Psalm 33 assigns to *righteousness* has a significant theological meaning for the psalm. Righteousness is linked to the covenant; it describes a person's dependence upon Yahweh; it has an element of divine election; and it has to do with an ethical lifestyle.

##### **6.4.1 Righteousness as element of the covenant**

Kraus (1988:379) makes the following comments concerning righteous people and the covenant:

- The righteous people live in the covenant of Yahweh, and his redemption is defined in Psalm 33 as a 'new song'.
- The word and advice of Yahweh are the disclosure of the old covenant.
- The creation and history of the universe are dependent upon the word and advice of Yahweh. He created and manages also the nations that think they live according to their own plans.

- Protection only comes from Yahweh as his eyes are observant of his people.

Weiser (1962:291) comments on *righteousness* (Ps. 33:1), by referring to Proverbs 14:34: *Righteousness* is a principle of the covenant, which sustains people in their relationship with God. Righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is the downfall of a nation.

Righteousness describes thus a spiritual condition of Israel who has a covenantal relationship with God. Their very existence depends on this agreement with God. They are managed by God and live according to his plans. In turn they enjoy the protection and provision of God. Weiser (1962:291) touches on ethics as an element of righteousness, but ethics is not central to the meaning of righteousness for Psalm 33, this will be discussed later in this section. It is important for now to acknowledge the presence of ethics as element of righteous people who are engaged in the covenant with God. The word *covenant* does not appear in Psalm 33, but there is reference in the psalm that suggests that the covenant is implied (as discussed in 2.7). The righteous people of Psalm 33 praise God for the advantages that they experience as people committed in a covenantal relationship with God.

#### **6.4.2 Righteousness as dependence upon Yahweh**

Lohfink and Zenger (2000:106-107) noticed that *righteousness* has an alternative meaning in Psalm 33: the central meaning of righteousness is not the absence of sin, but dependence on Yahweh. "Here trust and hope corresponds with Paul."

God is described in the *Psalter* as upright (Pss. 25:8, 92:15). People are righteous and upright when their identity is in Yahweh, the righteous God (Keck et al. 1996:810). The people are regarded as righteous if they submit themselves under the rule of Yahweh (Eaton 1967:98).

Keck et al. (1996:667) explains the meaning of *righteous* (צַדִּיק) in the *Psalter* as follows:

- Righteous is not in the first place a description of a person who lives an ethical lifestyle, but it is a description of a person having a relationship with God. The ethical lifestyle of a righteous person is only a reaction that flows from the mentioned relationship.
- Righteousness in the *Psalter* has to do with forgiveness of sins (Ps, 32:1-2), God's love and grace (Ps. 32:10-11), and dependence on him.
- The wicked, on the other hand, are independent from God and manages their own affairs.

God is righteous, and the people who identify with him and submit themselves to him are also called *righteous*. *Righteousness* in Psalm 33 has to do with people submitting themselves under the instructions of God, and not people living without sin. Righteousness does have an ethical connection to it, but for Psalm 33 righteous people are dependent on divine intervention for help when they are in need or in trouble. Righteousness is not earned when people do good deeds (Keck et al. 1996:667). Righteousness is a condition that people find themselves in when they are dependent on God, and involved in a relationship with him. The righteous people trust and wait on the grace of God (Ps. 33:20-22). The opposite of people who are dependent on God are people who manage their lives according to their own will. People who live according to their own will and plans are the wicked people that the *Psalter* refers to.

#### 6.4.3 Righteous as the chosen

Clifford (2002:170) makes the following comments concerning the status of the righteous (צַדִּיק) and upright (יֵשָׁר):

- Israel is regarded as righteous and upright, because they are the chosen people of God.
- They are made holy by God by bringing them into the sanctuary of the temple.
- Righteousness is thus the status of a person standing on holy ground of the temple.

In Psalm 33 righteousness has to do with Yahweh choosing Israel. He makes them holy by his action of divine election. The elected people of God are now called righteous and just. God's righteousness for the *Psalter* has to do with judging Israel's enemies for the injustices done by them, and restoring Israel to their former status (Kraus 1986:42-43). As the elected people Israel has an expectation that God will always decide and act in their favour. God will deal with the problem of enemies of Israel. Israel is thus the righteous people and their enemies are the wicked. Psalm 33 does not mention the word *wicked*, but it is assumed that the other nations who do not fear Yahweh are the wicked people.

The ways of righteous people (צַדִּיק) are played off against the ways of wicked people in Psalm 1 and 2. The ideal world is pictured where it goes well with the righteous and the wicked will perish. The righteous will not be over powered by the enemy, the wicked people (Creach 2011:51-55). There is a divine order that is observed in the *Psalter*, namely that it goes well with people that fear Yahweh, and the wicked people are punished. God placed an order there with creation, and he affirms this order with his righteousness (Grogan 2008:249). Yahweh commits himself to redress the wrongs done to his people (Ps. 33:13-14; Brown 2002:169-170). *Exodus* is an example of such commitment by God to redress the circumstances of his people. *Exodus* serves as paradigm for future redemption from enemies (Grogan 2008:251). Yahweh restores his order in the lives of his people when the enemies of Israel spoiled this order. God is experienced as fair and he will put everything in order again.

God's people are addressed in Psalm 33:1 as *righteous*. The righteous people are instructed to praise Yahweh. By addressing Israel, God's people as righteous they are reminded that they are the chosen people. They are also reminded that they are made righteous by God who is righteous. They are made holy by God who is holy. To be the chosen people of God means that there is a divine order that is in place and that works in their advantage. The divine order is that it will go well with the righteous people and the wicked will perish (Grogan 2008:249). The post exilic community has this deep rooted believe that God will act in their favour to restore them to their former glory as a unified nation managing themselves and not being

under foreign rule. Israel has *exodus* as reference of this divine order where God acted in the favour of the righteous people and saved them from foreign rule, and rectified the wrongs done to them. Psalm 33 testifies about this divine order, with creation and *exodus* as central to the psalm. With the same power that the righteous God created the universe and redeemed his people, he will also act on behalf of the righteous people who fear him (Ps. 33:18), by taking action against other nations to frustrate their plans (Ps. 33:10), and saving the righteous from death and famine (Ps. 33:19).

#### 6.4.4 Righteousness as an ethical lifestyle

According to Jacobson (2014:312-313) righteous (צַדִּיק) and upright (יָשָׁר) in Psalm 33 means the following:

- The righteous and upright are called upon to praise Yahweh.
- The righteous should not do unethical deeds, and they are opposed to wicked people. It does have an ethical connotation to it, but it is not all that it means. Righteous and upright are more than merely ethical words.
- Righteous and upright in the *Psalter* are words describing a relationship with God. They are the people who are totally dependent on Yahweh. They are aware of their own moral weakness, and therefore depend upon the grace of Yahweh.
- They are challenged to live ethical lives, because of their relationship with God. They are also challenged to live in harmony with other people (Ps 15; 24).

Forgiveness of sins is not central to the meaning of righteousness in Psalm 33 as mentioned in 6.4.2 (Lohfink & Zenger 2000:106-107). This study suggests that the author(s) of Psalm 33 presupposed that forgiveness of sins is an element of righteousness, because of its placement after Psalm 32. Psalm 32 emphasises the forgiveness of sins as central to the meaning of righteousness (Ps. 32:1, 2, 5). The grace of God is a central theme in Psalm 33, and may thus contribute to the theme of forgiveness of sins in Psalm 32 and not oppose it. Righteousness and ethical behaviour goes hand in hand in the Old Testament. Weiser (1962:291) refers to

Proverbs 14:34, where sin is the downfall of a nation. To understand the connection between righteousness and ethics is to bring it into the right perspective.

The right perspective of righteousness and ethics is that a person is not righteous when sin is absent. A person is righteous when involved in a relationship with God. They are dependent on the grace of God, because of their own moral weakness. The righteous person who is involved in a relationship with God is challenged to live an ethical lifestyle because of the nature of the mentioned relationship. The ethical lifestyle of a righteous person is thus only a reaction that flows from the demands of a relationship with God.

Although ethics is not central to the meaning of righteousness for Psalm 33 as discussed here, it may be contradicted by the strong wisdom influence as discussed in 3.5. If it is possible that Psalm 33 may belong to the Wisdom Psalms, then ethics plays a larger part in the meaning of righteousness than we think. Because of the good deeds and fear of the Lord the righteous may demand the privileges that they deserve like divine provision and protection.

### 6.5 Yahweh as faithful God

For Jacobson (2014:318-320)  $\text{טִּוּוֹ}$  describes the faithfulness of Yahweh:

- *The earth is full of the grace* ( $\text{טִּוּוֹ}$ ) of Yahweh is the central theological theme of Psalm 33 and the *Psalter*, that describes the faithfulness of Yahweh (Ps. 33:5, 18, 22; Jacobson 2014:318).
- Psalm 33 testifies to the covenantal hymn of Exodus 34:6 where Yahweh is described with words like: compassionate, gracious, kind ( $\text{טִּוּוֹ}$ ), and faithful (Jacobson 2014:318-319).
- Psalm 33 moves from all people of the world that have a relationship with Yahweh (Ps. 33:6-7, 9, 15), to the special relationship he has with Israel, the chosen nation (Ps. 33:12; Jacobson 2014:319). God is faithful by maintaining them with his grace (Jacobson 2014:319).
- “The Psalm goes on further to offer praise testimony to the faithfulness of God both to all creation and to Israel. In terms of creation, God’s faithfulness is made known in God’s continuing acts of creating and making creation into an

orderly, trustworthy environment in which human life can thrive” (Jacobson 2014:319).

This study agrees with the suggestion of Jacobson (2014:318-320) that grace (חֶסֶד) describes the faithfulness of Yahweh. Psalm 33 not only tells a story of people that benefit from the grace of Yahweh, but it also describes the character of Yahweh. They testify about Yahweh’s character that he is compassionate, kind, and faithful. Yahweh is faithful by committing himself to Israel that is most of the time unfaithful. He committed himself to them with a promise that they will be his people, and he will be their God. In this relationship he is faithful by acting on their behalf to protect and sustain them. He is faithful by creating a habitat that is orderly for people to live in.

The initiative of God to have a relationship with mankind has its origin in the חֶסֶד of God. As Murphy (2000:45-46) states: “The term חֶסֶד stands for the total relationship of the Lord and Israel: all his goodness, the promises and the covenants.” Everything begins with the חֶסֶד of God. The grace of Yahweh is for the psalmist the motive for creation and *exodus* (Botha & Potgieter 2010:6). Righteousness and justice have also their origin in grace (חֶסֶד) (Brown 2002:183). Yahweh is faithful to his people by keeping the promises that he made. He keeps on presenting grace to the people that he stands in a relationship with.

The psalm describes a covenant relationship between God and Israel, they hope in his grace and he saves them from hunger and their enemies (Allen et al. 1987:103). The grace of God according to Psalm 33 is not something that Israel will experience in eschatological time, but they will experience it in their lifetime. The grace of Yahweh is to the benefit of Israel in their current life situation (Murphy 2000:45-46). Grace is an element of the covenant that redeems and sustains Israel (Brown 2002:183). Yahweh is faithful to his people by acting on their behalf and sustaining them.

The earth is full of the grace (חֶסֶד) of Yahweh (v. 5). Psalm 33 gives the impression that God’s grace is not limited to Israel, because his grace is over all the earth. The grace of Yahweh that fills the earth is an indication that he is God over all the people

of the world (Mays 1994:149). Yahweh's faithfulness goes beyond the boundaries of Israel, because he is faithful to all people that believe in him and fear him. The faith of man and the grace of God react with one another as Weiser (1962:295) comments: "The psalm closes with the prayer that God's grace may descend upon those who, waiting for him, reach out towards him – a beautiful picture of the way in which God's grace and man's faith mutually respond to each other. It is a powerful confession of faith in God, in which possession and hope are equally strong."

## 6.6 Redemption

Weiser (1962:294) makes the following comments concerning the theme of redemption in Psalm 33:

- Only God can redeem the people. God can save a person from death. A person's life is in the possession of God, and he can keep it in life threatening situations that may overwhelm a person.
- Psalm 33 refers to *death* and *famine* in a similar way that the prophets spoke of *hunger* and *sword*. Death and famine are singled out as examples of misfortunes.
- The righteous person knows that he must only fear and trust God, because his life is in the possession of God.
- The grace of God sustains the righteous person to the extent that he will not be disturbed by troubles.

Weiser (1962:294) summarises what redemption in Psalm 33 is all about. Redemption for Psalm 33 is to be saved from life threatening situations, and the sustenance of life. Redemption according to Psalm 33 is studied in terms of the people Yahweh chose for his inheritance; redemption in the lifetime of Israel; and redemption of other nations.

### 6.6.1 Inheritance of Yahweh

Psalm 33:12 states that the nation is blessed whose God is Yahweh, the people he chose for his inheritance.

Jacobson (2014:316) makes the following remarks concerning *inheritance* in Psalm 33:

- The relationship of the people with God defines their identity; they are the chosen nation as the inheritance of Yahweh.
- The word inheritance does not merely refer to “property or possession”, it includes an element of promise.
- Inheritance means to be in unity with Yahweh, with a future secured by him.

The blessed nation that Yahweh chose for his inheritance receives thus a promise to have their identity in him, and to be a part of him (Jacobson 2014:316). This commitment by Yahweh towards the chosen nation is made through a covenant.

The covenant is central to Hebrew theology, and is thus important to include in this analysis of Psalm 33 (Craigie 2004:275). The covenant formula that is usually used to describe the relationship between Yahweh and Israel is: *I will be your God, and you will be my people* (Lohfink & Zenger 2000:85). Psalm 33 also contains a covenant formula, but it is a bit different. The covenant formula of Psalm 33:12 is: *Blessed is the nation whose God is Yahweh, the people he elected for his inheritance* (Lohfink & Zenger 2000:107). Lohfink and Zenger (2000:108) suggests that the alternative statement of the covenant proves that the covenant is not only associated with Israel, but also with all other nations (Lohfink & Zenger 2000:108). This was discussed in more detail in chapter 2 of this study.

According to Balentine et al. (2015a:159) the word that is mostly used in the psalms to describe the covenant is *grace* (רַחֲמֵי). Balentine et al. (2015a:159) translates רַחֲמֵי as *covenant love*. In Psalm 33:5 where it is stated that the earth is full of the grace of Yahweh forms the central statement of the psalm, and the rest of the psalm is a commentary of it (Keck et al. 1996:809). Although the word covenant is not mentioned in Psalm 33, the grace (רַחֲמֵי) of God represents the covenant in the psalm. The expression *blessed is the nation whose God is Yahweh, the people he elected for his inheritance* is thus also a commentary or explanation of the meaning of the grace (רַחֲמֵי) of God. Psalm 33 chooses to explore the meaning of רַחֲמֵי as divine

election in verse 12. Israel's name is not explicitly mentioned in the statement of election, and other nations could also be elected. The sovereignty of Yahweh over all nations implies possible redemption for non-Jews, for those who fear Yahweh (Terrien 2003:300). The  $\text{רָדַף}$  that fills the earth also spreads to other nations. The covenantal love has thus a universal dimension in Psalm 33.

Kraus (1986:59) describes the covenant as follows:

- The covenant is not established by Israel, whereby God acts as servant for them.
- Israel is chosen to be in the service of God.
- Yahweh chose Israel as his people (Ps. 100:3). It describes the relationship between Israel and God: he is their God and they are his people.
- The covenant describes the very existence of Israel. All the acts of Yahweh confirms the covenant he has with them.

God commits himself in a relationship with Israel through a covenant and makes a claim on them as his people, as Kraus (1986:59) puts it. If the universal element of the covenant is applied to this claim that Yahweh make on people it means that Yahweh may commit himself to and take another nation also in his service. Other nations may also experience the covenantal love of Yahweh. This confirms Israel's mission to the other nations (Kraus 1986:59).

### **6.6.2 Redemption in the lifetime of Israel**

For Murphy (2000:44) redemption in the *Psalter* and the rest of the Old Testament has to do with more than forgiveness of sins:

- Redemption refers to actions that Yahweh takes to the advantage of Israel.
- Redemption for Israel is *exodus* from Egypt and return from Babylon.
- Redemption can be experienced by an individual that was sick or oppressed.
- Redemption is the movement from suffering to well-being.

Psalm 33 understands redemption not as an eschatological event, but an event in the lifetime of Israel, according to Kraus (1988:379): The world as Israel knows it will

be changed by Yahweh to their advantage. The Lordship of Yahweh will be revealed to them, as he changes their real life situations.

The psalmists have a belief that Yahweh can change their life situation. Their expectation is not far in the future when time ends as Kraus (1988:379) observes. Psalm 33 states in verse 19 that Yahweh has the capacity to save a person from death and hunger. Verse 16-17 claims that victory cannot come from a king, hero or a horse or any other military resources. The reference to death, hunger, and war sums up the expectations the psalm has for redemption by Yahweh. They want to be saved from real life dangers. Redemption for them is to be saved from enemies that want to kill them and famine. Redemption for Psalm 33 has to do with victory in war, and to be saved from death and hunger. It is assumed that the psalmist and his audience are exposed to the trauma of war, because of the military references in the psalm. They probably saw many people die in battle, but still they believe that Yahweh can save them from death.

In Psalm 33 Israel also expects Yahweh to take steps in their advantage as with the rest of the context of the *Psalter* as Murphy (2000:44) puts it. Yahweh applies his sovereignty to the advantage of his people and those that fear him. Military resources are contrasted with the victory given by Yahweh (v. 18; Mays 1994:151). The kings of the world only have power that they receive from Yahweh (Keil & Delitzsch 1973:404-405). Any achievement is a gift of God (Keck et al. 1996:810). Victory in war is then also regarded as a gift from God.

### **6.6.3 Redemption of other nations**

Terrien (2003:49-50) describes Yahweh's sovereignty over the history of Israel and all the nations of the world in the context of the *Psalter*:

- Yahweh remembers his covenant forever, and his promises will last for many generations (Ps. 105:8).
- Israel was chosen to be a blessing to all the people of the earth (Gen. 12:3).
- However the *Psalter* also reflects Israel's nationalistic ideals and xenophobia, that were inspired by the *exodus* event (Pss. 105:25-38; 136:10-21; 114:14; 105:37-38).

Terrien (2003:300) describes the universal character of redemption: Yahweh is sovereign over the whole world, this means, that non-Israelites who fear him, may also be called *God's people*.

Psalm 33 states that Yahweh is sovereign over all the people of the world. His plans determine the history of all people (Ps. 33:10-12; Craigie 2004:273). His plans do not only involve his chosen people, but all the people of the world. The nations live lives determined by the sovereignty of Yahweh (Mays 1994:150). His counsel determines outcome of wars, and he decides about life and death of all people (Ps. 33:18-20). Yahweh plays thus an active role in international affairs, and in the lives of individuals. He decides whom he wants to choose (Ps. 33:12), present grace to, or frustrate (Ps. 33:10). He breaks the plans of nations, but chooses another nation as his people. He chose Israel as his people. Israel's name does not appear in the psalm, but it is assumed as mentioned earlier. The psalm does not attempt to explain the grounds for Yahweh's decisions, but it does indicate that he has special interest in people who fear him (Ps. 33:18).

The election of Israel as the people of Yahweh plays a role in the future redemption of the other nations (Terrien 2003:299). The choosing of a nation has its origin in the covenant (Ex. 19:5; Deut. 4:20; 9:26, 29; Briggs & Briggs 1969:289). He first redeems the nation he chose, and then the other nations of the world (Keil & Delitzsch 1973:404). According to verse 5 the earth is full of the grace (טוֹבָה) of Yahweh. The grace that is full of all the earth gives Psalm 33 its universalistic character. Israel spreads the message of Yahweh's grace to the other nations (cf. Pss. 9:11; 96:3; 105:1; Kraus 1986:59). Yahweh breaks the plans of the nations at first (vv. 10-11), but redemption for non-Jews are possible if they fear him (Ps. 33:18; Terrien 2003:300). The covenantal element of grace is now extended to all people of the earth, affirming God's sovereignty over all the earth (Allen et al. 1987:78-79). The calling of Israel to bless the nations with the news about Yahweh was not always that clear for them, because they also had nationalistic ideals (Terrien 2003:50).

Kraus (1986:59) explains the greater context of Israel's mission amongst the nations according to the *Psalter*:

- At first Yahweh exalts Israel as the chosen nation: Yahweh made the people of Israel to flourish, at the expense of other nations (Pss. 44:2; 78:55); he displays his power, by redeeming Israel from other nations (Ps. 77:14); he crushes the plans of other nations (Ps. 33:10); and judges the other nations, as he gathers them around him (Pss. 7:8; 9:8).
- Israel is the nation who God chose in order to have access to all the nations of the world. Although Israel plays the role as gateway to all people, they will always stand out amongst the nations.
- Israel's role is to tell the nations of Yahweh's good deeds (Pss. 9:11; 96:3; 105:1); and to inspire the people of the world to praise Yahweh (Pss. 66:8; 117:1).

## 6.7 Synthesis

Psalms 33 consists of the most common Hebrew theological elements like creation, history, and covenant. The grace (חֶסֶד) of Yahweh that fills the earth is the central statement of Psalm 33, and the rest of the psalm is a commentary of it. It can thus be said that Yahweh created through his grace, and manages history through his grace. Every theological theme of Psalm 33 gives thus a unique dimension on the grace of Yahweh.

The most obvious attribute of Psalm 33 is that it describes the sovereignty of Yahweh by negotiating a link between his acts of creation and redemption. This study approaches thus the theology of the psalm from the perspective of the sovereignty of Yahweh. The following theological themes of Psalm 33 are studied: Yahweh is sovereign over creation; Yahweh is sovereign over history; the meaning of righteousness for the psalm; and the faithfulness of Yahweh.

Yahweh is sovereign over creation. Psalm 33:6-9 describes how God created everything. He spoke a word and all things were created and he should be feared for that (Ps. 33:8). The *word* and *work* of God are placed in parallel statements, as it

describe his acts of creation and management of history. God's face dominates the psalm as he creates with words from his mouth and as he looks from heaven.

With the same sovereignty that he created, he manages the lives of all people of the world, through his advice (עֵצָה). Israel holds on to this hope that Yahweh will liberate them from foreign rule one day. Yahweh will decide the outcome of international politics and war (Ps. 33:16-17). The kings of the world only have power that they receive from Yahweh, and victory is a gift of him.

The faithfulness of Yahweh is described by *grace* (רַחֲמֵי). Psalm 33 not only tells a story of people that benefit from the grace of Yahweh, but it also describes the character of Yahweh. Psalm 33 testifies with the covenantal hymn of Exodus 34:6 about Yahweh's character that he is compassionate, kind (רַחֲמֵי), and faithful. Yahweh is faithful by committing himself to Israel. He committed himself to them with a promise that they will be his people, and he will be their God. In this relationship he is faithful by protecting and redeeming them (Ps. 33:19). Yahweh's faithfulness is universal, because he is faithful to all people that believe in him and fear him (Ps. 33:18).

Righteousness describes a spiritual condition of Israel who has a covenantal relationship with God. Their very existence depends on this agreement with God. They are managed by God and live according to his plans. In turn they enjoy the protection and provision of God. Righteousness does have an ethical connection to it, but in Psalm 33, the greatest attribute of righteousness, is to be dependent on Yahweh (Ps. 33:20-22). The wicked people on the other hand, are self-reliant, free from the advice of Yahweh. Righteousness in Psalm 33 has to do with divine election (Ps. 33:12). God's righteousness for the *Psalter* has to do with judging Israel's enemies for the injustices done by them, and restoring Israel to their former status (Ps. 33:13-14). This believe is rooted in a divine order that is observed in the *Psalter*, namely that it goes well with people that fear Yahweh, and the wicked people will perish (Ps. 1).

## Chapter 7: Final Synthesis

### 7.1 Introduction

### 7.2 Research problem

During a preliminary literature review the problem of the meaning of a 'new song' (Ps. 33:3) was exposed, because there is no consensus amongst scholars. The research problem entails the meaning of the 'new song' in Psalm 33:3, where the people are instructed to sing a 'new song' for Yahweh. Literary analysis, contextual analysis, detail analysis and theological analysis were applied to study this problem in Psalm 33.

### 7.3 Hypothesis evaluated

Throughout this study, I was of the hypothesis that the 'new song' that has to be sung is an anticipation of a new saving act that Israel expects of Yahweh. In Psalm 33 they remember what Yahweh has done for them during the *exodus* event, by placing the *exodus* event in parallel with the acts of creation. Israel as a post-exilic community believes that Yahweh will redeem them again, as he did in the past. The grace of Yahweh is extended to other nations than Israel, to redeem them too.

A literary, contextual, detail and theological analysis of Psalm 33 emphasises the sovereignty of Yahweh, which is displayed in him, being creator, redeemer and controller of Israelite and universal history. The sovereignty by Yahweh's grace is further displayed to choose any nation, who fears him, as his people.

The psalm's call to sing a 'new song' displays not only hope and trust in Yahweh, but also exposes his sovereignty (creation and redemptive power) as universal God of creation and all nations.

The hypothesis of this study is thus confirmed. The rhetorical objectives of Psalm 33 are summarised next.

## 7.4 Sovereignty of Yahweh displayed

The sovereignty of Yahweh is displayed in creation, redemption, his control over history, and his ability to choose any nation as his people. The sovereignty of Yahweh gives meaning to the term 'new song'.

### 7.4.1 Structure emphasizes - Sovereignty of Yahweh

The literary structure of Psalm 33 emphasises the sovereignty of Yahweh:

A concentric structure is followed with the following stanzas: stanza 1 Instructions to praise Yahweh (Ps. 33:1-5); stanza 2 Yahweh creates (Ps. 33:6-9); stanza 3 Yahweh is sovereign (Ps. 33:10-12); stanza 4 Yahweh redeems (Ps. 33:13-19); and stanza 5 Confession of trust and hope (Ps. 33:20-22).

Stanza 1 introduces the psalm with various instructions to praise Yahweh, of which one is to sing a 'new song' unto Yahweh. The following reasons are given why Yahweh should be praised: the word of Yahweh is just; his work is done in faithfulness; he loves righteousness and justice; and the earth is full of the grace of Yahweh. Stanza 1 introduced the *word* of Yahweh, and in stanza 2 the *word* of Yahweh is applied in creation and redemption.

In stanza 2 the sovereignty of Yahweh is described in the way that he created the universe, and executed redemption at the *exodus* event at the Reed Sea. Creation and redemption relate to one another by comparing the way how Yahweh contained the water when he created, and the containment of water at the Reed Sea by the time of the *exodus* (Ex. 15:8).

Stanza 3 forms the centre portion of the psalm, stating that Yahweh is sovereign over the entire world. He has control over international politics by frustrating the plans of the nations, and managing the history of the world through his advice. The sovereignty of Yahweh is further displayed when he chooses a nation as his people.

Stanza 4 introduces a new section is introduced where Yahweh redeems his people through his sovereignty. The stanza begins with Yahweh observing all the people of the world. He is described as sovereign, because he is the all-knowing God. Military

resources are mentioned, but it is the sovereignty of Yahweh that decides the outcome of war and saves people from death.

Stanza 5 is a confession of trust and hope in the sovereignty of Yahweh, because he is the helper and refuge of Israel.

The structure of Psalm 33, thus, emphasises the sovereignty of Yahweh. The *new song* that has to be sung, considered in the context of the sovereignty of Yahweh, recalls the *old* acts of Yahweh in the past, namely creation and *exodus*, and in view of this, they anticipate *new* redemptive acts in their future. The structure is a rhetorical vehicle that introduces an anticipation of something new, and then applies the paradigm of redemption to motivate the audience (readers) to trust and hope in Yahweh for changing their situation.

#### **7.4.2 Creation, redemption and control over history**

Psalm 33:6-9 describes how Yahweh created by speaking a *word*. He should be feared for demonstrating sovereignty over creation (Ps. 33:8). The word of Yahweh creates, judges, redeems and dictates what happens in history. The *word* of Yahweh is equal to the Torah, because both are described as just, faithful, righteous and graceful (Ps. 33:4-5). Yahweh thus brought everything in existence by the Torah. It thus implies that all the acts of Yahweh has its origin in the covenantal relationship with his people. Yahweh's acts of creation and redemption are related to one another. He confined the water of the sea during creation, and he confined the water of the Reed Sea when he redeemed Israel from Egypt (Ps. 33:7; Ex. 15:8). As the one who controls water, he controls life and chaos.

Psalm 33 has an expectation that Yahweh will redeem the people from a chaotic situation, because of his faithfulness. The faithfulness of Yahweh is described by the term *grace* (חַסֵּד), that forms the central theological theme of Psalm 33 and the *Psalter* (Ps. 33:5, 18, 22). The word *grace* (חַסֵּד) forms an *inclusio* framing the psalm between the two appearances of *grace* in verses 5 and 22. The text inside the *inclusio* (vv. 6-21) is a commentary on the meaning of *grace*. Psalm 33 testifies, with the covenantal hymn of Exodus 34:6, about Yahweh's character: that he is

compassionate, kind (רַחֵם), and faithful. He committed himself to his people with the covenantal formula (of Ps. 33:12): the nation that he chooses for his inheritance will be blessed (Jer. 7:23). In this relationship he is faithful by acting to protect and sustain them (Ps. 33:19).

The sovereignty of Yahweh is revealed in the way that he redeems his people in their lifetime. Redemption for Psalm 33 is actions that Yahweh takes to the advantage of his people in their life situation. Redemption for Israel meant the *exodus* event and their return from Babylon. Redemption entails the movement from suffering to well-being. The references to death, hunger, and military resources give a good indication of their redemptive expectations of Yahweh (Ps. 33:16-17, 19).

Yahweh's acts of creation and managing history cannot be separated from one another. With the same sovereignty that he created, he manages the lives of all people of the world. Yahweh created with his *word* and manages the history of all people with his advice (נְסִיחָה). Psalm 33:11 testifies that the advice of Yahweh will stand forever and his intentions from generation to generation. The psalm is confident that Yahweh will manage history in such a way that it will be to the advantage of his people: Yahweh foils the plans of the nations (Ps. 33:10); they will be saved from death and famine (Ps. 33:19); and Yahweh will decide the outcome of international politics and war (Ps. 33:16-17). The kings of the world only have power that they receive from Yahweh, and victory is a gift from him. The grace of Yahweh is not an abstract concept, but is real in the sense that he protects and preserves his people in their lifetime (Ps. 33:19).

Thus, Israel's paradigm of redemption consists of their reference to creation and *exodus*. The sovereignty of Yahweh is demonstrated in the way that he speaks a *word* to create, redeem, or manage history. Yahweh is faithful to his people, because all his acts are motivated by the covenantal relationship that he has with his people. The 'new song' alludes thus to new redemption acts motivated by the established relationship between Yahweh and his people.

### 7.4.3 Yahweh chooses any nation as his people

The sovereignty of Yahweh is further displayed in the way that he may choose any nation to be his people. People are made righteous by divine election. Yahweh is faithful to all people that fear him, because his grace is over all the earth (Ps. 33:5, 18). In Psalm 33:18 Yahweh gives special consideration to people who fear him and who wait for his grace. The text does not specify, that Yahweh gives special consideration to Israelites or any specific nation who fear him. For this reason it may be concluded that any nation who fears Yahweh, may be his people. This an additional dimension to the song that is 'new'.

The word that is mostly used in the psalms to describe the covenant is *grace* (חֶסֶד). Although the word covenant is not mentioned in Psalm 33, the grace (חֶסֶד) of God represents the covenant in the psalm (Ps. 33:5, 18, 22). The covenant formula that is usually used to describe the relationship between Yahweh and Israel is: *I will be your God, and you will be my people.*

The covenant formula of Psalm 33:12 is: *Blessed is the nation whose God is Yahweh, the people he elected for his inheritance.*

This alternative statement of the covenant formula proofs that the covenant is not only associated with Israel in this psalm, but also with all other nations. Israel's name is not explicitly mentioned in the statement of election, and other nations could also be elected. The sovereignty of Yahweh over all nations implies possible redemption for non-Israelites, for those who fear Yahweh. The grace (חֶסֶד) that fills the earth, also spreads to other nations. Yahweh's covenantal love has thus a universal dimension in Psalm 33. This confirms Israel's witness to the other nations. Yahweh first redeems the nation he chose (Ps. 33:12) by breaking the plans of other nations (Ps. 33:10), and then he also redeem other nations who fear him (Ps. 33:18). The covenantal element of grace is now extended to all people of the earth, affirming God's sovereignty over all the earth. Yahweh is in Psalm 33 not only the God of Israel, but the universal God of all nations (creatures and creation).

## 7.5 Synthesis

The structure and content of Psalm 33 emphasises the sovereignty of Yahweh. The sovereignty of Yahweh is displayed in creation, redemption, control over history, and his ability to choose any nation as his people. The hypothesis of this study concerning the meaning of a 'new song' is thus confirmed and means the following in the context of the sovereignty of Yahweh:

- Creation and redemptive acts of Yahweh form a paradigm for his people to have hope and trust that their chaotic / life threatening situation will change in the future.
- A new redemptive act by Yahweh is expected, because he decides what happens in the history of mankind.
- New redemptive acts are anticipated from an established covenantal relationship between Yahweh and Israel.
- A new era is entered by which any nation that fears Yahweh may be his people.

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## Annexure A: Translation, morphological analysis and text critical notes on Psalm 33

The morphological analysis of the Psalm is done by consulting Westminster Theological Seminary (2005), and the translation by consulting Holladay (2000). Text critical notes are taken from the Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia.

33:1 Shout with joy in Yahweh, you righteous, because a song of praise is fitting for the righteous.

תְּהִלָּה: a song of praise	נִאֲנָה fitting	לְיֹשְׁרִים b for the upright	בְּיְהוָה in Yahweh	צְדִיקִים righteous	רִנְנוּ a shout with joy!
תְּהִלָּה fem sing abs	נִאֲנָה adj fem sing abs	יֹשֶׁר part הַ prep לְ adj masc pl abs	יְהוָה prep בְּ	צְדִיק adj masc pl abs	רִנְנוּ piel impvmasc pl

a) The Septuagint places τῷ Δαυδ 'to David' in the beginning of the text (cf. Craigie 2004:270).

A few Hebrew codex-manuscripts pairs Psalm 33 with Psalm 32 (cf. Craigie 2004:270). But the internal structure of Psalm 33 suggests that it is separate from Psalm 32 (see Craigie 2004:270).

b) A few Hebrew codex-manuscripts and the Syriac translation reads ולישרים and *for the upright instead* of לְיֹשְׁרִים *for the upright*. Craigie (2004:270) suggests that the *lamedh* is interpreted as a vocative and not a preposition.

33:2

Praise Yahweh with a lyre, praise him with a ten stringed instrument.

וּמְרִי-לֹ:	עֲשׂוֹר	בְּנֶגֶל	בְּכִנּוֹר	לַיהוָה	הוֹדוּ
Praise him!	ten	with a stringed	with a lyre	Yahweh	praise!
זָמַר	עֲשׂוֹר	instrument/ harp	כְּ prep כִּנּוֹר masc sing	יְהוָה prep לְ	יָדָה
piel impv masc pl לְ	masc sing abs	בְּ prep נֶגֶל masc sing constr	abs		hiphil impvmasc plural

33:3

Sing to him a new song, do well by playing with a shout of joy.

בְּתִרְוָעָה:	נָגַן	הֵיטִיבוּ	חֲדָשׁ	שִׁיר	שִׁיר-לוֹ <sup>a</sup>
with a shout of joy	to play	do well!	new	a song	sing to him!
כְּ prep תִּרְוָעָה fem	נָגַן	יָטַב	חֲדָשׁ	שִׁיר	שִׁיר
sing abs	piel inf constr	hiphil impvmasc pl	adj masc sing abs	masc sing abs	qal impvmasc pl לְ
					prep suff 3 masc sing

a) A few Hebrew codex-manuscripts and the Hebrew fragment codex from Cairo read לַיהוָה 'to the Lord' instead of לוֹ 'to him' (cf. Craigie 2004:270). According to Craigie (2004:270) is לוֹ 'to him' the more feasible option because of the 3 + 3 metrical pattern of the first three verses. But I think the pattern is not disturbed by either of the options, because the hyphen connecting the first two words gives the same metric effect.

33:4

Because the word of Yahweh is just, and all his work in faithfulness.

בְּאֵמוּנָהּ: in faithfulness בְּ prep אֵמוּנָהּ fem sing abs	וְכָל־מַעֲשָׂהוּ and all his work כָּל part וְ masc sing constr מַעֲשָׂה masc sing constr suff 3 masc sing	דְּבַר־יְהוָה the word of Yahweh דְּבַר masc sing constr יְהוָה	כִּי־יָשָׁר because straight/ right/ just יָשָׁר part כִּי adj masc sing abs

33:5

He loves righteousness and justice, the earth is full of the grace of Yahweh.

הָאָרֶץ: the earth אָרֶץ part הָ fem sing abs	מְלֵאָה she is full מָלֵא qal perf 3 fem sing	יְהוָה of Yahweh	חֶסֶד the faithfulness/ kindness/ grace חֶסֶד masc sing constr	וּבְיָשָׁפֶט and justice יָ part וּבְ masc sing abs	צְדָקָה righteousness צְדָקָה fem sing abs	אָהֵב he loves אָהֵב qal part masc sing abs

33:6

By the word of Yahweh heavens were made, and by the breath of his mouth all its hosts.

כָּל־צְבָאָם:	פִּיו	וּבְרוּחַ	נִעֲשׂוּ	שָׁמַיִם	יְהוָה	בְּדָבָר
all his hosts	of his mouth	and by the breath	were made	heavens	of Yahweh	by the word
כָּל־masc sing	פִּיהֶֿmasc sing	וְ prep	עֲשִׂה	שָׁמַיִם		בְּ prep
constr	constr suff 3 masc	רוּחַ	niph perf 3 pl	masc pl abs		דָּבָר
צָבָא	sing	sing constr				masc sing constr
constr suff 3 masc						
pl						

33:7

He gathers the waters of the sea like the dam, he puts the deeps of the sea in storehouses.

תְּהוֹמוֹת:	בְּאֲצָרוֹת	נָתַן	הַיָּם	מֵי	כַּדָּם	כֹּנֵס
the deeps of the	in storehouses	he puts	of the sea	the waters	like the dam	he gathers
sea	אוֹצָרוֹת	נָתַן	part	מַיִם	כַּ prep הֶ part	כֹּנֵס
תְּהוֹם	masc pl abs	qal part masc sing	abs	masc pl constr	דָּם	qal part masc sing
pl abs		abs			masc sing abs	abs

a) The Septuagint translates 'like the dam' כַּדָּם with 'like a leather bottle or wineskin' ὡς ἄσκαδὸν (cf. Craigie 2004:270).

And the Hebrew fragment codex from Cairo reads כַּיָּד (א) instead of כַּיָּד.

The Syric translation compares Symmachus and the old Latin translation.

33:8

Let all the earth fear Yahweh, because of him all the inhabitants of the world will be afraid.

תָּבֵל:	כָּל־יֹשְׁבֵי	יִגְוְרוּ	מִמֶּנּוּ	כָּל־הָאָרֶץ	מִיְהוָה	יִרְאוּ
of the world	all the inhabitants	they will be afraid	because of him	all the earth	Yahweh	let them fear!
תָּבֵל	כָּל	גִּוְר	מִן	כָּל masc sing	יְהוָה prep מִן	יִרְא
fem sing abs	masc sing constr	qal impf 3 masc	prep suff 3 masc	constr הָ part		qal impf 3 masc
	יֹשְׁבֵי	pl, jussive in	sing	אָרֶץ		pl, jussive in
	qal part masc pl	meaning		fem sing abs		meaning
	constr					

33:9

Because he said, and it happened, he commanded, and it stood.

<sup>b</sup> וַיִּעֲמֹד:	וְהוֹאֲצִיָּהּ	וַיִּהְיֶי	אָמַר	הוּא	כִּי
and it stood	he commanded	and it happened	he said	he	because
וַיִּעֲמֹד part	הוּא	וַיִּהְיֶי part	אָמַר	הוּא	
qal waw consec impf	3 masc sing וְהוֹאֲצִיָּהּ piel	qal waw consec impf	qal perf 3 masc sing	3 masc sing	
3 masc sing	perf 3 masc sing	3 masc sing			

a) All or the most important codex, and the Syric translation writes וַיִּהְיֶי in the plural and not singular as in the BHS.

b) The Septuagint translates וַיִּעֲמֹד as plural ἐκτίσθησαν, and the Syric translated it as w'gjm.

33:10

Yahweh destroyed the plan of the nations, he hindered the thoughts of the peoples.

עַמִּים: <sup>a</sup>	מִחְשָׁבוֹת	הִנְיִיא	עֲצַת־גּוֹיִם	הִפְרִיר	יְהוָה
of the peoples עַם masc plural abs	the thoughts/ intentions מִחְשָׁבָה fem pl constr	he hindered/ prevented נִוָּא hiphil perf 3 masc sing	the plan/ advice of the nations עֲצָה fem sing constr מַגִּידֵי masc pl abs	he destroyed פָּרַר hiphil perf 3 masc sing	Yahweh

a) The Septuagint added καὶ ἀθετεῖ βουλὰς ἀρχόντων as duplicate.

33:11

The advice of Yahweh will stand for all time, the intentions of his heart to generation to generation.

וְדָר:	לְדָר	לְבֹ	מִחְשְׁבוֹת	תַּעֲמֹד	לְעוֹלָם	יְהוָה	עֲצַת
and generation וְדָר part masc sing abs	to generation לְ prep וְדָר masc sing abs	of his heart לְבֹ masc sing constr suff 3 masc sing	the thoughts/ intentions/ plans מִחְשְׁבָה fem pl constr	she shall stand תַּעֲמֹד qal impf 3 fem sing	for all time/ for ever לְ prep וְעוֹלָם masc sing abs	of Yahweh	the advice/ plan עֲצַת fem sing constr

33:12

Blessed is the nation that Yahweh is his God, the people he elected for his inheritance.

לוֹ:	לְנַחֲלָה	בָּחַר	הָעָם	אֱלֹהָיו	אֲשֶׁר־יְהוָה <sup>a</sup>	הַגּוֹי	אֲשֶׁר־יְ
for him לְ prep suff 3 masc sing	for his inheritance לְ prep נַחֲלָה fem sing abs	he elected בָּחַר qal perf 3 masc sing	the people עָם part masc sing abs	his God אֱלֹהִים masc pl constr suff 3 masc sing	that Yahweh אֲשֶׁר part relat יְהוָה	the nation גּוֹי part masc sing abs	blessed is he who אֲשֶׁר part

a) A few Hebrew codex manuscripts read וְיְהוָה and not אֲשֶׁר־יְהוָה

33:13

Yahweh looked from heavens, he saw all the sons of man.

הָאָדָם <sup>c</sup>	אֲתָ כָּל־בְּנֵי <sup>b</sup>	רָאָה <sup>a</sup>	יְהוָה	הִבִּיט	מִשָּׁמַיִם
of man	all the sons	he saw	Yahweh	he looked at	from heavens
part הָאָדָם masc sing	direct object אֲתָ	qal perf 3 masc רָאָה		hiphil perf 3 masc הִבִּיט	prep שָׁמַיִם masc pl מִן
abs	marker כָּל masc sing	sing		sing	abs
	constr בְּנֵי masc pl				
	constr				

a) Various Hebrew codex manuscripts and the Syric translation add וְ to רָאָה

b) אֲתָ does not appear in a few Hebrew codex manuscripts.

c) A few Hebrew codex manuscripts read אָדָם and not אָדָם

33:14

From his dwelling place he stared at all the dwellers of the earth.

הָאָרֶץ:	כָּל־יֹשְׁבֵי	אֵל	הַשֹּׁגֵה	מִמְכוּן־שִׁבְתּוֹ <sup>a</sup>
of the earth	all the dwellers	at	he stared/ gazed	from his place of dwelling
הָpart אֶרֶץfem sing abs	יֹשֵׁבִיםasc sing constr qal part masc pl constr		שָׁגַח hiph perf 3 masc sing	מִןprep מְכוּן־מִasc sing constr qal יֹשֵׁב inf constr suff 3 masc sing

a) Hebrew codex manuscripts and the Arabic translation add וְשָׁוֶה

33:15

The creator of all their hearts, he notices all their works.

אֵל־כָּל־מַעֲשֵׂיהֶם:	הֵמְבִיִן	לְבָבָם	יְהִי <sup>a</sup>	הַיֹּצֵר
all their works	he notices/ pay attention	their hearts	of all (completely)	the creator
אֵלprep כָּל־מַעֲשֵׂהֶםasc pl constr suff 3 masc pl	יְהִי part בִּין hiph part masc sing abs	לְבָבֵםasc sing constr suff 3 masc pl	יְהִיadverb	הָpart יֹצֵר qal part masc sing abs

a) The Septuagint and Symmachus translate יְהִי with κατὰ μόνας

33:16

No king can be victorious with great power, a hero cannot save himself with great strength.

בְּרִבְכָּח: <sup>c</sup>	לֹא יִצִּיל	גִּבּוֹר <sup>b</sup>	בְּרִבְחֵיל <sup>a</sup>	נוֹשֵׁעַ	אֵין מֶלֶךְ
with great strength	cannot save himself	a hero	with a great army	be victorious	no king
כִּי prep רִבְּ masc sing	לֹא part יִצִּיל niph impf	adj masc sing abs	כִּי prep רִבְּ masc sing	יִשָּׁע	אֵין adverb הֵּ part
constr כָּח	3 masc sing		constr חֵיל masc sing	niph part masc sing	מֶלֶךְ masc sing abs
masc sing abs			abs	abs	

a) The Hebrew fragment codex from Cairo and the old Latin translation add suffix third person singular to בְּרִבְחֵיל<sup>a</sup>

b) Various Hebrew codex manuscripts, the Septuagint, the Aquila and the Syric translation add 'and' to גִּבּוֹר<sup>b</sup>

c) The Septuagint, the Symmachus, the Syric translation, and the Hebrew fragment codex from Cairo add suffix third person singular to בְּרִבְכָּח<sup>c</sup>

33:17

It is a lie that the horse establishes redemption, and by his power he shall not save.

יִמְלֹט <sup>a</sup> :	לֹא	חֵילוֹ	וּבְרָב	לְתִשׁוּעָה	הַסּוּס	שָׁקָר
he shall save	not	his power	and by great/ abundance	for redemption	the horse	a lie/ in vain
מָלַט piel impf 3 masc sing		חֵילוֹ masc sing constr suff 3 masc sing	וּבְרָב part בְּ prep masc sing constr	לְ prep תִּשׁוּעָה fem sing abs	הַ part סוּס masc sing abs	שָׁקָר masc sing abs

a) The Septuagint translates יִמְלֹט<sup>a</sup> with σωθήσεται. And the Syriac translation adds *lrkbh*.

33:18

Behold, the eye of Yahweh is toward the fearful, to those waiting for his grace.

לְחַסְדּוֹ:	לְמַיְתָרִים	אֶל־יִרְאַיוֹ	יְהוָה	עַיִן <sup>a</sup>	הִנֵּה
for his kindness/ grace לְחַסְדּוֹ prep masc sing constr suff 3 masc sing	to those waiting יְחַלְּprep part piel part masc pl abs	toward the fearful אֶל prep יִרְאָ adj masc plural constr suff 3 masc sing	of Yahweh	the eye עַיִן sing constr	behold

a) The Hebrew codex manuscripts, the Septuagint, and the Syriac translation read עֵינַי instead of עַיִן.

33:19

To rescue their life from death, and to keep them alive in hunger.

בָּרָעָב: in the hunger/ famine	וְלִחְיֹתָם and to keep them alive	נַפְשָׁם their life	מִמָּוֶת from death	לְהַצִּיל to rescue
•.part prep part מָּאָב masc sing abs	part לְ prep חַיָּה piel inf constr suff 3 masc pl	נַפְשָׁ fem sing constr suff 3 masc pl	מִמָּוֶת prep מָּוֶת masc sing abs	לְ prep נָצַל hiph inf constr

33:20

Our soul waits for Yahweh, he is our helper and refuge.

הוא: he	וּמִגִּבּוֹרֵנוּ and our refuge	עֲזָרְנוּ <sup>a</sup> our helper	לַיהוָה for Yahweh	חֹכְתָהּ she waits	נַפְשֵׁנוּ our soul
הוא pron 3 masc sing	part גִּבּוֹרֵנוּ sing constr suff 1 pl	עֲזָר masc sing constr suff 1 plural		חֹכְתָהּ piel perf 3 fem sing	נַפְשֵׁ fem sing constr suff 1 pl

33:21

Because in him our heart shall rejoice, because we trusted in his holy name.

בָּטַחְנוּ:	קֹדְשׁוֹ	בְּשֵׁם <sup>a</sup>	כִּי <sup>a</sup>	לִבֵּנוֹ	יִשְׂמַח	כִּי־בּוֹ
we trusted	of his holy	in the name	because	our heart	he shall rejoice	because, in him
בָּטַח qal perf 1 pl	קֹדְשׁ masc sing constr suff 3 masc sing	בְּ prep שֵׁם masc sing constr		לֵב masc sing constr suff 1 pl	יִשְׂמַח qal impf 3 masc sing	כִּי part כִּי prep suff 3 masc sing

<sup>a-a</sup> כִּי בְּשֵׁם must read וּב, compare Septuagint.

33:22

Let your grace be on us, Yahweh, as though you make us hope in you.

לְךָ:	יַחְלֵנוּ	כְּאִשֶׁר	עָלֵינוּ	יְהוָה	יְהִי־חַסְדֶּךָ
in you	you make us hope	as though	on us	Yahweh	let Your faithfulness/ kindness/ grace be
לְךָprep suff 2 fem sing	יַחְלֵנוּpiel perf 1 pl	כְּprep אִשֶׁרpart rel	עָלֵנוּprep suff 1 pl		יְהִי qal impf 3 masc sing juss חַסְדֶּךָmasc sing constr suff 2 masc sing

### Annexure B: Words / semantic areas that are repeated in Psalm 33:

Verse	Praise	Righteous	Yahweh	God	Word of Yahweh	Advice	Grace / faithful	Redemption	Yahweh created	Yahweh sees
1	רָנְנוּ	צְדִיקִים	בְּיְהוָה							
	תְּהַלֵּלָהּ	לְיֹשְׁרִים								
2	הוֹדוּ		לַיהוָה							
	זְמִירוֹתָיו									
3	שִׁירוֹתָיו									
	שִׁיר									
	בְּתִרוּעָה									
4		כִּי־יֵשֶׁר	דְּבַר־יְהוָה		דְּבַר־יְהוָה		בְּאֵמֻנָה			
5		צְדָקָה	יְהוָה				תִּסֹּד			
		וּמִשְׁפָּט								
6			יְהוָה		בְּדָבָר				נַעֲשֶׂהוּ	
					וּבְרִיטָה					
7									כִּנֹּס	
									נִתָּן	
8			מִיְהוָה							
9									אָמַר	

Verse	Praise	Righteous	Yahweh	God	Word of Yahweh	Advice	Grace / faithful	Redemption	Yahweh created	Yahweh sees
									הוא-צִוָּה	
10			יְהוָה			עֲצַת־גִּוִּים		הַפִּיר		
						מִחֻשְׁבוֹת		הִנְיָא		
11			יְהוָה			עֲצַת				
						מִחֻשְׁבוֹת				
12			אֲשֶׁר־יְהוָה	אֱלֹהֵיו				אֲשֶׁרִי		
13										הַבֵּיט
										רְאֵה
14										הַשְׁגִּיחַ
15										הַמְבִּין
16								נוֹשָׁע		
								לֹא־יִנָּצֵל		
17								לְתַשׁוּעָה		
								יְמַלֵּט		
18			יְהוָה				לְחַסְדּוֹ			עֵין
19								לְהַצִּיל		
								וְלַחְיוֹתָם		
20			לִיהְגָּה					עֲזַרְבוּ		
								וּמַגְנִיבוּ		

Verse	Praise	Righteous	Yahweh	God	Word of Yahweh	Advice	Grace / faithful	Redemption	Yahweh created	Yahweh sees
21										
22			יְהוָה				יְהוָה יִחַסְדֵּךָ			