

**Divine presence and evil oppressors:
A redactional perspective on Psalm 139**

**A Thesis
by
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DECLARATION

I, Carine Botha, hereby declare that the dissertation

Divine presence and evil oppressors: A redactional perspective on Psalm 139

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

Carine Botha

November 2020

Dedicated:

To my beloved parents, Johan and Tienkie, who have always been my source of inspiration, encouragement and fortitude to undertake every challenge of life with zeal, enthusiasm and fear of God.

To my dearest husband, Frik, whose unyielding love and support are the force behind my success.

Thank you for always believing in me.

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"To our God and Father be glory for ever and ever. Amen."

- Philippians 4:20

TABLE OF CONTENTS

DECLARATION	2
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	4
TABLE OF CONTENTS	5
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION	9
1.1 Introduction.....	9
1.2 Motivation and relevance.....	11
1.3 Research problem	14
1.4 Objectives.....	16
1.5 Research methodology.....	19
1.6 Hypothesis	21
1.7 Chapter division.....	21
1.8 Some practical matters:.....	23
1.8.1 Terminologies.....	23
1.8.2 Technical and literary terms:	25
1.8.3 Orthography	26
1.8.4 Abbreviations.....	26
1.8.5 Pronunciation key for IPA (International Phonetic Alphabet) transcriptions of Biblical Hebrew	27
CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE OVERVIEW.....	30
2.1 Introduction.....	30
2.2 Current research on Psalm 139:.....	32
2.2.1 Unity and division of Psalm 139.....	33
2.2.2 Psalm 139 and its colourful <i>genre</i> allotments	45
2.2.3 Placement of Psalm 139 in Book V of the <i>Psalter</i>	60
2.3 Synthesis.....	67

CHAPTER 3: LITERARY ANALYSIS.....70

3.1	Introduction.....	70
3.2	Text and translation	70
3.3	Demarcation of the text	76
3.4	Textual criticism.....	78
3.5	Morphological analysis	79
3.6	Syntactical analysis	81
3.7	Structural and content analysis	86
3.7.1	Introduction	86
3.7.2	Structural analysis of Psalm 139.....	89
3.7.3	Content analysis of Psalm 139.....	90
3.8	Poetic techniques:	98
3.8.1	Sounds.....	98
3.8.2	Patterns.....	101
3.8.3	Semantics	107
3.9	<i>Genre and Sitz im Leben</i>	112
3.10	Dating.....	117
3.11	Synthesis.....	119

CHAPTER 4: REDACTIONAL FRAME OF PSALMS 138-140122

4.1	Introduction.....	122
4.2	Psalm 138	123
4.2.1	Translation	123
4.2.2	Morphological analysis.....	125
4.2.3	Syntactical analysis.....	129
4.2.4	Structural analysis and content analysis	131
4.2.4.1	Introduction.....	131
4.2.4.2	Structural analysis of Psalm 138	134
4.2.4.3	Content analysis of Psalm 138	135
4.2.5	Poetic analysis	139
4.2.6	<i>Genre and Sitz im Leben</i>	143
4.2.7	Dating and authorship.....	146

4.3	Psalm 140	146
4.3.1	Translation	146
4.3.2	Morphological analysis	150
4.3.3	Syntactical analysis	153
4.3.4	Structural analysis and content analysis	156
4.3.4.1	Introduction	156
4.3.4.2	Structural analysis of Psalm 140	157
4.3.4.3	Content analysis of Psalm 140	158
4.3.5	Poetic analysis	162
4.3.6	<i>Genre</i> and <i>Sitz im Leben</i>	165
4.3.7	Dating and authorship	168
4.4	Comparative relationship between Psalms 138-140	169
4.4.1	Comparative relationship between Psalm 138 and Psalm 139	169
4.4.2	Comparative relationship between Psalm 139 and Psalm 140	179
4.5	Synthesis	188
CHAPTER 5: PSALM 139 AND THE FINAL DAVIDIC PSALTER (PSS. 138-145)		193
5.1	Introduction	193
5.2	Composition and redactional grouping of final davidic <i>Psalter</i>	194
5.3	Semantic profile of final davidic <i>Psalter</i>	229
5.4	Theological profile of final davidic <i>Psalter</i>	239
5.5	Recurring themes in final davidic <i>Psalter</i> : protection and dependence	243
5.6	Psalm 139 as a confession of dependence on and call for protection by YHWH	247
5.7	Synthesis	250
CHAPTER 6: PSALM 139 AND BOOK V (PSS. 107-150)		254
6.1	Introduction	254

6.2	Composition and redactional grouping of Book V	256
6.3	Semantic profile of Book V	275
6.4	Theological profile of Book V	288
6.5	Recurring theme in Book V: exclusive kingship of YHWH	293
6.6	Psalm 139 as a declaration of YHWH's exclusive kingship	297
6.7	Synthesis	302
CHAPTER 7: FINAL SYNTHESIS.....		307
7.1	Introduction.....	307
7.2	Research methodology.....	308
7.3	Conclusions	310
7.3.1	Chapter 2: Literary overview	310
7.3.2	Chapter 3: Literary analysis	312
7.3.3	Chapter 4: Redactional frame of Psalm 138-140.....	314
7.3.4	Chapter 5: Psalm 139 within the final davidic <i>Psalter</i> (Pss. 138-145)	318
7.3.5	Chapter 6: Psalm 139 within Book V (Pss. 107-150).....	321
7.4	Hypothesis.....	327
7.5	Final remarks.....	327
ADDENDUM A: MORPHOLOGICAL ANALYSIS OF PSALM 139.....		329
ADDENDUM B: STRUCTURAL ANALYSIS OF PSALM 139.....		341
ADDENDUM C: POETIC TECHNIQUES IN PSALM 139.....		344
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....		348

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

The poetic beauty of Psalm 139 is unparalleled in the *Psalter*. For centuries Psalm 139 has been the object of admiration and praise. In this piece of literary art, the psalmist manages to express the immeasurability of the knowledge of God in a way that resonates within the depths of every reader.¹ Over the years Psalm 139 has obtained certain unofficial titles, such as “*one of the greatest passages in all of Scripture*” as designated by White (1984:202) or “*the most personal expression in Scripture of Old Testament’s radical monotheism*” as hailed by Mays (1999:425). Kirkpatrick (1912:785) appraises it as the culmination of the awareness of the most intimate relationship that exists between God and humankind,² ultimately making Psalm 139 the highlight of the entire *Psalter*, which expresses this same theme throughout. It can thus be said without a doubt that Psalm 139 remains one of the most moving psalms in the Psalm Book. What gives it particular prominence is the intimacy of YHWH’s all-encompassing knowledge of the human being that, to this day, is quoted and referenced to by scholars, clergy and laymen alike.

Despite the placid tone that colours the majority of Psalm 139, the reader unwillingly and unwittingly stumbles into the boisterousness of verses 19-22. These few verses seemingly disrupt the tranquillity of the preceding verses 1-18, making verses 19-22 the equivalent of a big black blotch of paint across the forehead of Leonardo da Vinci’s ever so serene *Mona Lisa*. Needless to say, notwithstanding the admiration Psalm 139 receives, it is notorious for its extreme exegetical divide.³

¹ “Even today its words are still felt to be a classical testimony to what the theologians intend to convey by such concepts as the omnipresence, omniscience, and omnificence of God, and this is because one of the problems which man has to face, which has continually been raised by men and which they have continually attempted to solve whenever the relationship between God and man occupied the thought of those who believe in him, is here discussed in the widest possible setting,” (Weiser, 1962:801).

² In this study the term ‘humankind’ is preferred over the terms ‘man’ and ‘mankind’ as to be inclusive.

³ Peels (2008:35-36) remarks that vv. 19-22 stands in disagreement to the praise and harmony of which the foregoing verses consist. Based on the extreme incongruousness displayed by vv. 1-18 (coloured

Due to the ostensible incompatibility of the tones present in Psalm 139, no secret could be made of the fact that scholars do not agree on its interpretation.⁴ Some consider the outburst and appeal of verses 19-22 in direct contrast to the rest of the psalm and propose that it needs to be separated from verses 1-18 and verses 23-24 to fully grasp the meaning of the psalm.⁵ In turn, others consider the dissonance in Psalm 139 a cardinal part of the text and stand firm that verses 19-22 should not be separated from the whole. It is in the light of this interpretational discord that we take a closer look at Psalm 139 in this study.

Research to date had put an exceptional focus on Psalm 139 and its unity and/or division. Questions such as ‘should the psalm be read as a whole?’ and ‘how should the diverging parts of verses 1-18 together with verses 23-24 be united with verses 19-22?’ has coloured research in the field of Psalm 139. While the questions asked does not seem to be lacking, the methods followed to arrive at a clearer understanding of the text, seems to confuse rather than clarify its meaning, due to a one-dimensional approach to the text. To date research in Psalm 139 bear witness to the fact that the text has been analysed and studied in isolation.

Recent trends in Psalm research has put exceptional emphasis on the placement of psalms underlining the importance of a psalm’s relationship to the psalms it is surrounded with, as well as the specific placement of the psalm within the greater context of the *Psalter*. This method stresses that a psalm must always be studied within the textual relationships in which it is embedded, thus studying the psalm holistically, rather than studying the psalm in isolation or separated from its surrounding textual contexts, thus one-dimensionally. The importance of such a

by peacefulness and adoration) versus vv. 19-22 (coloured by extreme hatred against the Psalmist enemies) he declares this passage unique in the *Psalter*.

⁴ For a brief overview of the interpretational problems that scholars experience when dealing with Ps. 139, see Van der Ploeg (1974:435-437). Some insights on the different interpretational possibilities are offered. These different scholarly views will, however, be referred to and entered into discussion with in subsequent chapters.

⁵ Peels (2008:36) accurately conceives the scholarly dissension by asking the relevant question: “*Are not the contents of vv. 19-22 a dissonance in the context of the whole psalm, which in itself is moving because of the serene language, full intimacy and worship?*”

holistic approach⁶ to psalm texts is inevitable when trying to better understand the purpose and meaning of such texts.

This study will attempt a holistic approach in the interpretation of Psalm 139 based on the literary composition of the text⁷ coupled with an exploration of the psalm's specific location within the broader context of the *Psalter*.⁸ Approached holistically the question can be asked: How can the seemingly out of place plea of verses 19-22 be reconciled with the peaceful tone of the rest of the psalm, when considering the placement of Psalm 139?

1.2 Motivation and relevance

For years Gunkel's position on the interpretation of psalms using *genre* classification, have dominated psalm research. Following Gunkel's position, it is an undeniable fact that every psalm is an individual piece of poetry penned down in its own right.⁹ Contemporary psalm studies, however, reveal a definite move away from a solely form-critical approach to the psalms, to a redactional-critical approach where the importance of inquiring into the relationships that exist between psalms and groups of psalms becomes the focus of the study.¹⁰ The increased concern is shown towards investigating the specific placement of a psalm within the various collections (or smaller groupings) as well as the specific psalm's placement within the various books of the *Psalter* (or larger groupings).

The position of Hermann Gunkel, particularly on the *genre* classification of Psalm 139, has been influential for years. According to the research of Gunkel & Begrich (1998:37), the belief was that Psalm 139 should be classified as a hymn. This reading

⁶ See 1.8.1 'Holistic approach' for clarification on what the term refers to in this study.

⁷ An important part of a synchronic analysis and inquiring into a text is asking whether the text conveys what the average reader perceives when engaging with the text (Peels, 2008:37).

⁸ The placement of any psalm in the *Psalter* should be a determining factor in our understanding of the psalm (Van der Ploeg, 1974:435).

⁹ Psalms as individual poems are written with a particular approach, whether it is a 'setting-in-life' for the purpose of private religious practice or a 'setting-in-liturgy' for the purpose of public religious practice (Gillingham, 1994:232).

¹⁰ The notion that psalms cannot be studied in isolation and should always be studied in relation to the surrounding psalms and groupings in which the psalm is located can largely be contributed to the work of Gerald Henry Wilson, Brevard Childs and Erich Zenger.

was later disputed by other scholars proposing a multitude of other *genre*-possibilities for Psalm 139. When attempting to understand Psalm 139 according to Gunkel's form-critical approach¹¹, scholars are faced with the dilemma of the ambiguity of the psalm.¹² In verses 1-18 the powerful omnipresence, omniscience and omnipotence of YHWH are extolled with beautiful poetic imagery. Suddenly verses 19-22 interrupts this striking song of praise with the unobserved wrath of the psalmist against the wicked. Verses 23-24 then continues under the first part of the psalm, with a request to YHWH for guidance. This outwardly contradictory nature of the psalm gives rise to the fact that scholars disagree, first of all, on the unity of Psalm 139. Consequently, not one specific *genre* has been allocated to the psalm and as a result confusion exists on the meaning of the psalm. Brueggemann & Bellinger (2014:581) rightfully asserts that the complexity of the psalm is reflected in the endeavour of form critics to define the psalm's type.

It becomes clear that the confusion that exists surrounding the unity, *genre* and significance of Psalm 139 is largely because the text is studied in isolation. Owing to the contributions of Wilson (1992:130) together with Zenger (2010:17-66) as well as the combined work of Hossfeld & Zenger (2011:545) there is a growing emphasis on the fact that psalms cannot be read in isolation, but must always be studied within the relationships of the surrounding texts. With the prevailing interest in psalm research being a focus on questions regarding the composition, editorial unity and overall message of the *Psalter* as a literary canonical unit with a specific structure and message, it is thus important to study Psalm 139 within its different contexts within the *Psalter*¹³.

¹¹ Gunkel & Bgrich (1998:2) makes the observation that there are absolutely no internal organisational principles for the individual psalms. According to this notion there are general groups, but the more common tendency is that no internal relations between neighbouring psalms can be discerned. The overall *genre*-groupings proposed by Gunkel (1998:4) are: Pss. 5-7; 54-57; 61-64; 140-143 as 'complaints of the individual' / 65f; 95-100; 103-105; 134-139; 145-150 as 'hymns' / 40f as 'thanksgiving psalms' / 20f as 'royal psalms' / 79f as 'communal complaints' / 127:1f; 3-5 as 'wisdom speech' / 111f as 'alphabetical psalms' / 74-38 as 'those treating the faith of Israel' / 105f as 'those containing narratives' / 46-48 as 'those with eschatological content'

¹² Due to the diverse nature and character of individual psalms and groups of psalms as well as a lack of definite historical references in the psalms, it is a complex task to date psalms and place them in an original context (Toy, 1884:80). One such psalm subjected to the controversy of interpretation is Ps. 139.

¹³ Little is known about the history of the composition of the *Psalter* as it is known to us today. We do, however, know that the Psalm Book is redactionally grouped into five separate parts, each of which

The different contexts or relationships in which Psalm 139 is firmly embedded are that of the fifth book of the *Psalter* (Pss. 107-150) as well as the final davidic *Psalter* (Pss. 138-145). Psalm 139 also stands in relation to its preceding psalm (Ps. 138) as well as its following psalm (Ps. 140). A genuine understanding of Psalm 139 requires an investigation of these important contexts or relationships of which Psalm 139 forms part of.

Any inquiry into the nature and significance of Psalm 139 should keep in mind that the psalm is set amid the unique theological profile of Book V of the *Psalter* with a specific focus on the universal Kingdom of YHWH. According to Zenger (1998:77-81), Book V of the *Psalter* can be distinguished primarily from the other four books in the bundle on two levels. The first level of distinction involves the linguistic profile of the book. Continuous use of the two verbs *hll* (praise) and *ydh* (give thanks)¹⁴ is characteristic of the linguistic character of the book. However, the second and most important level of distinction is the theological profile of Book V. Central to the theology of Book V of the *Psalter* is the clear vision of a universal Kingdom of YHWH brought about by a theophany on Zion. This universal Kingdom is contrasted to the davidic kingdom.

The unique use of language in the psalm, along with the thematic repetition of YHWH's supremacy colours Psalm 139 with a continuous universalistic concept of God. Furthermore, Psalm 139 should be examined as part of the final collection of the Psalms of David (Pss. 138-145). The question should be asked: 'Why is Psalm 139 attributed to David along with the other psalms in this collection?' Finally, Psalms 139's relationship with its direct neighbouring psalms (Pss. 138 and 140) should be considered to fully grasp the specific placement of the psalm. A holistic exploration of

concludes with a type of doxology. The first four doxologies can be found at Pss. 41:13; 72:18-19; 89:52 and 106:48. The last psalm of the entire bundle, Ps. 150 in its entirety, is considered to be the doxology of the last book of the *Psalter*. The final form of the *Psalter* is a reflection of the five books of the Torah. Thus, it is clear that the *Psalter*, as delivered to us over the centuries, has been given to us in a very particular form. Any inquiry regarding a psalm must therefore take into serious consideration the placement of the psalm in the *Psalter* (Wilson, 1992:130).

¹⁴ See 1.8.4 (p. 25) for the pronunciation key for IPA (International Phonetic Alphabet) transcriptions of Biblical Hebrew in this study.

these different contexts of the psalm can make a positive contribution to the understanding of the unity and significance of Psalm 139.

1.3 Research problem

A form-critical approach to any text gives precedence to the *genre* of the text. In form-criticism, the *genre* of the psalm becomes the non-negotiable, fundamental foundation upon which all further research of the psalm must build.¹⁵ Mowinckel (1992:1) adds that to understand a psalm historically, one must first try to determine the liturgical or private place and function of the psalm in the religious life of ancient Israel,¹⁶ thus establishing the *Sitz im Leben* of the psalm and consequently determining its *genre*. In this respect Psalm 139 is unique because it has not yet been classified under one of the traditional psalm *genres*¹⁷ (Allen, 2002:323; Brueggemann & Bellinger, 2014:581; Clifford, 2003:279; Hossfeld & Zenger, 2011:537; Kraus, 1989:511:511; Terrien, 2003:881).

The *genre* of Psalm 139 is a subject of major controversy in the study of the psalm. Various efforts to assign a *genre* to Psalm 139 includes that of Gunkel stating that the basic mood of the psalm was that of a hymn filled with enthusiasm and praise for YHWH. However, this interpretation of Psalm 139 seems to be based primarily on the contents of verses 1-18 and neglects to take into contemplation the objections of verses 19-22. Some classify the psalm as a lamentation pointing out that the psalmist begs YHWH to end the lives of the wicked. The psalm, however, lacks other characteristics of a lamentation.¹⁸ Brueggemann & Bellinger (2014:584) postulates

¹⁵ “Accordingly, *genre* research in the Psalms is non-negotiable, not something one can execute or ignore according to preference. Rather, it is the foundational work without which there can be no certainty in the remainder. It is the firm ground from which everything else must ascend,” (Gunkel, 1998:5).

¹⁶ Mowinckel assumes a historical as well as religious phenomenological understanding of the text as critical to placing a psalm within a particular *genre*.

¹⁷ According to Gunkel (1967:30-39) the psalms of the *Psalter* can be divided into the following five main *genres*: Hymns; Community Laments; Songs of the individual; Royal Psalms; Entrance liturgies, Torah songs and Blessings

¹⁸ In Ps. 139 a definite assertion of innocence as well as a call to the curse of enemies is present, both characteristic of psalms of lament (Gunkel, 1967:19-20). However, the persecuted in this psalm is not the psalmist, but YHWH. The psalmist doesn't call on God to curse and remove the psalmist enemies, but rather to slay YHWH's own enemies – those who speak with evil intent about YHWH. Furthermore, though there is a distinct invocation of God in vv. 19-22 and a certain acknowledgement of innocence

that Psalm 139 is written against a backdrop of wisdom literature. Allen (2002:330) proposes persecution as a basis for understanding the psalm while Terrien (2003:881) advocates praise for a divine omnipresence as the setting from which Psalm 139 should be interpreted. The reason for the debate about the *genre* is twofold. First of all, Psalm 139 exhibits a mixed form and second, to date scholars have not yet been successful in determining the *Sitz im Leben* of the psalm. This makes it nearly impossible for Psalm 139 to be placed within the fundamental context of its origins (Toy 1884:80). Consequently, scholars cannot seem to reach an agreement on how the diverging parts of Psalm 139 should be read and understood. A form-critical approach thus proves to be lacking in aiding the reader to understand the observed dualism in the text.

The divergent nature of the interpretation of Psalm 139 is caused by the conspicuous break in form and tone which occurs between verses 18 and 19 and the conflicting and irremediable moods within the psalm itself. The fervent eruption of verses 19-22 varies greatly with the tranquillity of the rest of the psalm, causing the reader to be disturbed by the psalmist's insistence on YHWH's condemnation of evil oppressors. Consequently, the vast majority of scholars isolate the parts and deals with them separately.

Allen (2002:323) along with most scholars insists that, when studying individual parts of the psalm, Psalm 139 displays a mixed form of primary *genres*. To this Gerstenberger (2001:405) comments that some exegetes wrongfully insist that some parts of Psalm 139 determine the comprehension of Psalm 139 as a whole - letting the tail wag the dog if you will. This has led to colourful but unfortunately non-consistent interpretations of Psalm 139.¹⁹ Consequently, the problem arises as to whether Psalm

and righteousness of the psalmist in vv. 23-24, the psalm lacks the overall wailing tone of which individual lamentations primarily consist. This again gives rise to the assumption that the psalmist was not the one being persecuted, but rather it is YHWH who is maltreated, while the psalmist simply expresses unanimity with God.

¹⁹ "Psalm 139 is one of the most intensely studied poems in the Psalter. The discussion about its genre classification has been going on for a long period of time with no end in sight. Elements and inklings of various categories of psalms can be detected in the different subunits. The exegete who insists that one single aspect must be determinative for the whole psalm may choose among complaint, thanksgiving, hymn and wisdom discourse. All these avenues have been tried, to the effect that the picture of our psalm is very colourful in Old Testament research," (Gerstenberger 2001:405).

139 should still be read as a coherent whole, or whether Psalm 139 should be read and interpreted as an editorial aggregation.

This research will endeavour to understand the unity of Psalm 139, not by attempting to allocate the 'correct' *genre* to the psalm as a means of attempting to understand the psalm, but by considering the specific placement of the psalm and consequently the various relationships in which Psalm 139 stands with its neighbouring texts. It will contribute to understanding the meaning of the psalm within Book V of the *Psalter* (Pss. 107-150). Furthermore, it will attempt to understand the specific placement of Psalm 139 within the final davidic collection of the *Psalter* (Pss. 138-145) at the same time relating the psalm to its direct neighbours (i.e. Pss. 138 and 140).

The question endeavoured to answer is: how can the seemingly out of place plea to the condemnation of evil oppressors in verses 19-22 be reconciled with the peaceful tone of the realisation of divine presence in verses 1-18 and 23-24, when taking the placement of Psalm 139, within its various collections, into consideration?

1.4 Objectives

The objectives of this study are:

- I. To inquire into current research on Psalm 139.
 - To inquire into how scholars have addressed the question of the unity and/or division of Psalm 139 with specific reference to verses 19-22.
 - To inquire into the different *genre* allotments of Psalm 139.
 - To aid the interpreter in understanding the contradictory and shortcoming nature of existing research on Psalm 139.
 - To aid the interpreter in identifying the pitfalls when confronted with the ambiguous nature of Psalm 139.
 - To create a framework from which the current study of Psalm 139 can draw insights.

II. To do an intra-textual analysis of Psalm 139

- To perform a literary analysis of Psalm 139.
- To gain a better understanding of different textual features of Psalm 139.
- To determine the interrelationships that exists between textual features.
- To gain insights into what the different textual features endeavours to communicate to the reader.
- To address interpretational problems concerning the structural unity of the text, with a specific focus on verses 19-22.
- To aid the interpreter in understanding the text on a literary level.
- To aid the interpreter by proposing a structure for the text based on textual features.
- To address interpretational problems about the *genre* and the *Sitz im Leben* of the text.
- To create a framework of understanding of the text on which subsequent chapters can build.

III. To do an inter-textual analysis of Psalms 138, 139 and 140.

- To perform a literary analysis of both Psalm 138 and Psalm 140.
- To gain a better understanding of different textual features of Psalm 138 and Psalm 140, respectively.
- To gain insights into what the different textual features endeavour to communicate to the reader.
- To gain insights into the interrelatedness of all the textual features on a literary level.
- To establish the textual relationship that exists between Psalms 138 and 139 as well as Psalms 139 and 140.
- To highlight similarities and differences between Psalm 139 and Psalms 138 and 140.

- To aid the interpreter in understanding the placement of Psalm 139 in between Psalms 138 and 140.
 - To create a framework for the inquiry of the placement of Psalm 139 within the greater collection of the Psalms of David (Pss. 138-145) in the subsequent chapter.
- IV. To do an inter-textual analysis of Psalm 139 within the final collection of the Psalms of David in which it is embedded.
- To give an overview of inter-textual relationships between Psalm 139 and the rest of the collection of the Psalms of David (Pss. 138-145).
 - To gain a better understanding of textual features of the final collection of the Psalms of David.
 - To gain insight into what the textual features communicate to the reader.
 - To gain insight into the interrelatedness of all textual features to establish the textual relationship that exists between psalms in this collection.
 - To highlight similarities and differences between Psalm 139 and the rest of the psalms in this collection.
 - To aid the interpreter in understanding the placement of Psalm 139 in this final davidic collection.
 - To become the framework for the interpretation of diverging tones present in Psalm 139 within the still greater collection of the psalm of Book V (Pss. 107-150) in the subsequent chapter.
- V. To understand the place and function of Psalm 139 within the greater collection of Book V of the *Psalter*, in which it is embedded.
- To understand Book V of the *Psalter* as a compositional unit with specific themes.

- To gain insight into the semantic and theological profile of Book V of the *Psalter* by inquiring into recurring lexemes and theological themes present in the collection.
 - To gain insight into the structures, divisions and editorial units present in Book V of the *Psalter*.
 - To gain insight into the place and function of the final davidic collection in Book V of the *Psalter*.
 - To gain insight into the place and function of Psalm 139 in Book V of the *Psalter*.
 - To aid the interpreter in comprehending individual parts as well as the whole of Psalm 139 within the framework of Book V of the *Psalter*.
 - To become the framework in concluding the meaning and purpose of Psalm 139 within the different textual relationships it is embedded with.
- VI. To synthesise the findings of the above research and to apply it to the research problem and hypothesis.
- To synthesise findings of the above enquiry into Psalm 139 as well as its different textual relationships.
 - To apply the results of research to the research problem and hypothesis.
 - To make some final remarks on what the current study reveals about the unity and meaning of Psalm 139.

1.5 Research methodology

Literature is a form of communication. Any form of communication implies a sender and a recipient of the communicated message. However, for the recipient to correctly receive and understand the communicated message delivered by the sender a common language or 'code' must be used. The recipient must simultaneously be aware of the language or 'code' (the text) as well as the background (the context) from which the communication originated (Prinsloo 2008:50). Therefore, it is important to

analyse a text on both a textual level as well as a contextual level. No word, phrase, sentence or text can ever be read, interpreted and understood in isolation. To uphold the authenticity of any text and to prevent the interpreter from reading his/her presuppositions into a text, a contextual approach must be followed. According to Prinsloo (2014:i), a semiotic approach always consists of three so-called contexts. The first is the intra-textual context which illustrates the intricate relationship that exists between letters, words, sentences and phrases. The second is the inter-textual context which illustrates the relationship between the demarcated text and its neighbouring texts. The third is the extra-textual context illustrating the social-historical background from which the text originated.

It thus becomes clear that researching a text must be a holistic exercise that considers the textual as well as the contextual elements of the text. Accordingly, for a more comprehensive understanding of the text in this study, the research method will consist of a combination of intra-, inter- and extra-textual research methods, thus a combination of both synchronic and diachronic research methods. To come to a more holistic understanding of Psalm 139, research must be conducted on all three 'levels' of the text.

The starting point of this study is a synchronic or rather literary study of the text of Psalm 139. In this part of the study, the text of Psalm 139 will be studied on the levels of grammar, vocabulary, poetic features, etc. as well as the interrelatedness of these textual features. Different aspects of the text will be explored individually to discover linguistic clues without allowing non-linguistic clues, such as the historical development of the text, to influence the text. This analysis will help to investigate the structural unity of Psalm 139 with a specific focus on the apparent incongruous verses 19-22. Accordingly, other interpretational problems such as the question on the *genre* and the setting of the psalm will also be addressed in this section. At this point in the study, the method uses can be typified as a literary-historical method.

Furthermore, a diachronic approach will be taken and Psalm 139 will be investigated from an inter-textual as well as an extra-textual perspective. This part of the study is no longer concerned with the text in isolation but rather focuses on the series of events that modifies the language to the form it is currently being studied in. In this section of

the study, we will investigate the similarities and differences between Psalm 139 and its surrounding texts. We will also inquire into how Psalm 139 can be distinguished from other texts based on characteristics. In this section of the study, the editing and compilation of Book V of the *Psalter* will be examined to determine the role and place that Psalm 139 assumed in the redactional process of the *Psalter*. In this part of the study, the method used can be typified as a redactional-critical method.

1.6 Hypothesis

The hypothesis for this study is:

A holistic analysis conducted by means of a literary-historical method (synchronic) as well as a redactional-critical method (diachronic) will reveal a definite structural division in Psalm 139. This structural division will bear witness to the redactional altering and positioning of Psalm 139 in between Psalms 138 and 140 to link the foregoing and following sections within the theological framework of Book V of the Psalter. It is within this editorial nature of Psalm 139 that the seemingly out of place plea of verses 19-22 attesting to the condemnation of evil oppressors can be read in coherence with, rather than in contrast with, the peaceful tone of the realisation of divine presence as displayed in verses 1-18 and 23-24. This study will reveal that even though verses 19-22 is an editorial aggregation to Psalm 139, it serves to unite and portray the theological discourse of Book V of the Psalter, revealing a clear focus on the universal kingdom and exclusive kingship of YHWH.

1.7 Chapter division

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

Chapter 2 consists of a literature review that summarises and describe the current state of research in Psalm 139. In the literature review, the primary focus falls on how scholars understand the unity of Psalm 139. Emphasis is placed on how scholars comprehend and deal with the break between verses 18 and 19. A further focal point

of this chapter is to summarise the allotment of various *genres* to Psalm 139 by respective scholars. Finally, this literature review focus on how scholars have regarded and assessed the placement of Psalm 139 in its greater context that is Book V of the *Psalter*.

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

Chapter 4 consists of a diachronic analysis of Psalm 139. Here the editorial history of Psalm 139 is explored. In this chapter, the emphasis falls on recent trends in psalm research not to focus on the individuality of the relevant psalm, but rather to focus on the redaction of the *Psalter* and the unique arrangement of psalms and groupings of psalms in the greater context of the *Psalter*. This chapter therefore, examines Psalm 139 from an inter-textual perspective. Attention is given to the relationship Psalm 139 have with other texts in its immediate context. An inter-textual analysis is undertaken between Psalm 139 and its preceding and following psalms, Psalms 138 and 140. An overview of inter-textual similarities and differences between the relevant texts is highlighted.

Chapter 5 focuses on Psalm 139 within the final davidic collection in the Psalm Book. Here the composition and redactional grouping of Psalms 138-145 is explored to determine why these eight psalms were editorially grouped to form the last davidic unit. The semantic profile of the final davidic *Psalter* is studied to identify keywords and phrases that distinguish and bind together this grouping of psalms from the rest of Book V of the *Psalter*. Additionally, the place and function of the final davidic collection within the framework of Book V of the *Psalter* is enquired into, highlighting

its core themes as dependence on and protection provided by YHWH. Ultimately Psalm 139 is explored as a confession of dependence on YHWH, while the theme of a call for the YHWH's protection is echoed in verses 19-22 of the psalm.

Chapter 6 takes a broader focus, by emphasising on Psalm 139 within Book V of the *Psalter*. The composition and editorial grouping of Book V of the *Psalter* (107-150) is enquired into. The semantic profile of Book V is explored to highlight keywords and phrases that separate it from the rest of the Psalm Book in tone and form. Besides, repeating theological themes is differentiated to discern a theological framework in which Psalm 139 could be read and interpreted. The exclusive Kingship of YHWH as a recurring theme in Book V of the *Psalter* is analysed. Ultimately Psalm 139 is explored as a declaration of YHWH's exclusive kingship over the psalmist.

Chapter 7 serves as a summary of findings made in the foregoing research. This chapter consists of a critical discussion of the findings of the study. A summary of the conclusions reached in the investigation is made. An answer to the hypothesis of the study is given. In conclusion, some remarks are made on the study.

1.8 Some practical matters:

1.8.1 Terminologies

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

Ancient Near East:

The Ancient Near East is used in this study to refer to the area that closely corresponds to the contemporary Middle East.²⁰ The term "Ancient Near East" refers not only to a vast geographical region but also to a long chronological period in which many different peoples originated and existed in a variety of different natural environments. Benzel et al (2010:9) describe the Ancient Near East as a combination of different living conditions in which various populations gave birth to rich and complex cultures.

²⁰ Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Syria, Lebanon, Turkey, Iraq and Iran (Snell, 2005:xviii)

Synchronic analysis:

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

Diachronic analysis:

Diachronic analysis of a text-primarily focuses on the historical development of the text. De Saussure (2013:104) states that a diachronic study is no longer concerned with language in isolation, but rather the series of events that modifies the language to the form it is currently being studied in. Talstra (1995:207) adds that while a synchronic approach focuses on how a text can be read based on linguistic knowledge, a diachronic approach concentrates on the question of how the text was produced. A diachronic analysis, therefore, does not study the text in isolation, but rather focus on the process of the maturing of the text.

Holistic approach:

Within this study, the term 'holistic approach' does not refer to a combination of the multitude of Biblical exegetic-critical methods that exist but rather refers to the necessity of studying the placement of a text within the smaller and broader context in which it is located within the Bible. This understanding is drawn primarily from the contributions of Wilson (1992:130), Zenger (2010:17-66) as well as the combined work of Hossfeld & Zenger (2011:545) in which emphasis is placed on the fact that psalms cannot be read in isolation. According to the extensive work of the mentioned scholars, there is emerging interest in psalm research on the relationships in which a psalm is embedded. Looking at a psalm in isolation using form-criticism, makes way for a holistic approach to the psalm, thus studying the psalm with all the different contexts in which it is located. For the purpose of this study, the term 'holistic approach' thus assumes the meaning of a context-comprehensive approach to the text.

Exclusive Kingship:

Throughout the Old Testament, kingship is a prominent theme. References to human kingship can be found in the Hebrew Bible as early as Genesis 14. It is only in 1 Samuel 8:5 that the nation of Israel expresses the desire to have a human king of their own. Before this, Israel had leaders in the form of patriarchs, priests and prophets, however the leadership was directed by the rule of YHWH as divine king. And so, Israel transitioned from a theocratic rule to a monarchic rule. The response of YHWH to Israel's request of earthly kingship is telling: "...*they have rejected me as their king*" (1 Sam. 8:7). Requesting and accepting a monarchy to rule over Israel was equalled to rejecting YHWH's kingship. History and particularly the exile served as proof of the failure of human kingship and the culmination of absolute monotheism (Gnuse, 1997:69). With their return from Babylonian exile, there is a renewed realisation of divine kingship. Within this study, the term 'exclusive kingship' serves to describe the post-exilic realisation of the fallibility of human kingship and the awareness of the universal and supreme rule of YHWH. The term 'exclusive kingship' of YHWH refers to YHWH's dominion over the nations and the eradication of foreign monarchs (Pss. 110:5; 135:10-11; 136:17-20; 149:8) as well as the subsequent acknowledgement and praise for YHWH's universal rule that will proceed from these foreign monarchs (Pss. 138:4; 148:11). In this study, the motifs of Psalm 139 are read within the wide-ranging kingship motifs of Books IV and V, with the realisation that Divine kingship is far more comprehensive than human kingship. Thus, the exclusive kingship of YHWH in Psalm 139 also includes motifs not primarily associated with human kingship.

1.8.2 Technical and literary terms

Colon (pl. cola):

Words grouped to form a phrase as a smaller constituent part of a verse.

Chiasm (pl. chiasms):

A sequence of elements that are repeated in reverse order. Also known as introverted parallelism.

Merism:

An indication of the whole by referencing its parts. To make note of individual elements to indicate a totality.

Inclusio:

A literary device which begins and ends a poem/stanza/strophe in the same way by the repetition of a word, phrase or concepts. This is also known as a ring composition.

1.8.3 Orthography

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

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

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

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

1.8.4 Abbreviations

The following abbreviations are being used:

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

In addition, the following abbreviations are also used:

BCE	Before Common Era
BHS	<i>Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia</i>
Cf.	Compare
Ed or Eds	Editor of Editors
e.g.	<i>exempli gratia</i>
KJV	King James Version
LXX	Septuagint
NAS	New American Standard Bible
NRS	New Revised Standard Version
Ps.	Psalm
Pss.	Psalms
v.	verse
vv.	verses
11QPs ^a	The Psalms scroll of Qumran Cave 11

1.8.5 Pronunciation key for IPA (International Phonetic Alphabet) transcriptions of Biblical Hebrew

The following tables are an exposé of how the IPA (International Phonetic Alphabet) represents Biblical Hebrew in the following study:

Table of Hebrew consonants:

Hebrew letter	Romanisation
א	'
ב	<i>b</i>
ג	<i>g</i>
ד	<i>d</i>
ה	<i>h</i>
ו	<i>w</i>
ז	<i>z</i>

ה	<i>h</i>
ט	<i>t</i>
י	<i>y</i>
כ	<i>k</i>
ל	<i>l</i>
מ	<i>m</i>
נ	<i>n</i>
ס	<i>s</i>
ע	<i>'</i>
פ	<i>p̄</i>
צ	<i>ṣ</i>
ק	<i>q</i>
ר	<i>r</i>
ש	<i>s</i>
ז	<i>š</i>
ת	<i>t̄</i>

Table of *begadkephat* letters (letters containing the *dageš lene*):

Hebrew letter	Romanisation
ב	<i>b</i>
ג	<i>g</i>
ד	<i>d</i>
כ	<i>k</i>
פ	<i>p</i>
ת	<i>t</i>

Table of Hebrew vowels (shown as preceded by *b*):

Hebrew letter	Romanisation
With <i>matres lectionis</i>	
בָּ	<i>bā</i>
בֹּ	<i>bō</i>
בִּ	<i>bû</i>
בֵּ	<i>bē</i>
בֶּ	<i>bê</i>
בִּי	<i>bî</i>
Without <i>matres lectionis</i>	
בַּ	<i>ba</i>
בֹּ	<i>bō</i>
בִּ	<i>bū</i>
בֵּ	<i>bē</i>
בִּי	<i>bi</i>
בִּי	<i>bo</i>
בֵּי	<i>be</i>

With vocal <i>sh^ewā</i>	
בִּי	<i>b^e</i>
בִּי	<i>bǎ</i>
בִּי	<i>bǒ</i>
בִּי	<i>bě</i>

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE OVERVIEW

2.1 Introduction

Psalm 139 bestows upon us a fraction of a glimpse into the glory that is YHWH. It exposes the being of YHWH as ever-present, all-knowing and almighty, while all along showcasing human life as nestled in God's hands. It has been described by scholars as one of the most beautiful psalms in the Psalm Book (Van der Ploeg, 1974:435). Even though it is considered one of the most picturesque pieces of Biblical poetry, it is an inevitable fact that Psalm 139 gives rise to controversial and divergent interpretations. The reason for this apparent controversy is because while contemplating God the psalmist suddenly bursts into bouts of anger and resentment – calling on God to investigate and remove the wicked. Goldingay (2008:627) alludes to the psalmist's plea to be investigated and scrutinised by YHWH as an inconsistency in the text. The inconsistency being that one cannot realise that there is no escape from YHWH's examination and at the same time suggest that one can survive YHWH's inspection despite humankind's inherent wickedness. This clear-cut textual dissension, consisting of a pertinent break in form and tone, gives rise to some scholars insisting that the composition of the psalm, is to be considered a strange phenomenon as it is uncommon in the rest of the Psalm Book (Allen, 2002:320). Such a description of divine attributes, coupled with exaggerated language which is put together with an incredible depth of thought, is nowhere else to be found other than in Psalm 139 itself (Scroggie, 1978:44).

In Psalm 139 the psalmist tries to convey in words, what is essentially inexplicable, namely the nature and being of YHWH. Young (1965:110) proposes a "*special revelation*" from which to draw such an encompassing doctrine of God as is disclosed in Psalm 139. This is done from some or other personal experience with YHWH, for the psalm speaks of an intimate relationship between YHWH and the psalmist. Waltke & Houston (2010:521) believe that it is only when one has experienced the uniqueness of a personal encounter with the *Great I am* that one can express this kind of tension

witnessed in Psalm 139 - a tension exposed in the conflict between the inexpressible and the intimacy of a relationship with YHWH. The personal nature of Psalm 139 is reflected in the ambiguous character of the psalm. In support of this premise, Mays (1999:425) states that Psalm 139 is most likely the greatest personal expression of radical monotheism that occurs in the entire Old Testament. For Weiser (1962:802) this absolute ambiguous character of the psalm points to the human being's inability to understand the greatness of YHWH. It thus becomes clear that Psalm 139 tries to express in words and metaphoric constructs the significance and supremacy of YHWH through a relational familiarity claimed by the psalmist.

There are prominent elements within Psalm 139 itself that confirm this personal undercurrent. Segal (2013:653) indicates that the psalmist bases an understanding of YHWH on personal experience rather than relying on abstract and dogmatic thinking by referring to the number of times the psalmist respectively refers to the self and YHWH. In Psalm 139 a total of thirty-six references are made to YHWH by way of names, pronouns and pronominal suffixes together with the fifty personal references to the psalmist or the "I". This observation corroborates the fact that Psalm 139 consists of a truly personal exposé of an intimate relationship that exists between the psalmist and a deeply personal God. It is thus clear from the language of the psalm that Psalm 139 centres around the premise of relationship – the relationship between humankind and the divine (Burden, 1991:131). When seeking to interpret Psalm 139, this proven relational discourse should set the tone for contemplations on the text.

Scholars are not of one mind as to what the specific circumstances are that gave rise to the composition of Psalm 139. However, from the content of the psalm, it is an unmistakable fact that the distinctiveness of Psalm 139 arises from profoundly personal experience. From this personal awareness, the psalmist tries to articulate the epitome of YHWH with not only flattering representations of YHWH's character but also with what seems at first glance to be unbecoming. This paradoxical nature of the text gives rise to a plurality of contradictory analysis and interpretations of Psalm 139. These differing interpretations based on the ambiguous *albeit* personal content of the text itself illuminates the array of perspectives and motives that are hidden within the psalm. Nevertheless, this should not be considered an obstacle in the interpretation of the psalm, rather it should be considered a key as to unlocking the multitudes of

dimensions present in this thickly layered text. It becomes clear that any attempted interpretation of Psalm 139 should be approached with much-needed caution. The personal nature and character of Psalm 139 should not be overlooked, as it forms a critical baseline from which any interpretation should sprout. As is true for any exposition of a text, a study of Psalm 139 should guard against inadvertently reading subjective prejudices into the text (Anderson, 1992:904). This study attempts to provide an understandable order to various and divergent interpretations of Psalm 139, without giving preference to one above the other. In this chapter, the focus falls on summarising research from Psalm 139 to date.

2.2 Current research on Psalm 139

Research on Psalm 139 to date reveals two tendencies. The first tendency is to focus on the unity and/or division of the psalm. Research within this movement endeavours to make sense of the dissension between the calming tone of verses 1-18 and 23-24 and the disturbing plea in verses 19-22. Scholars partaking in this line of thought usually concludes in an argument either for or against the unity of the psalm. The second tendency in research on Psalm 139 is focused on the psalm's *genre*. Scholars partaking in this movement go to great lengths to prove the placing of the psalm within a pre-determined *genre*. The list of proposed *genres* to Psalm 139 is seemingly endless, as the psalm reveals inklings of various *genres*. In this section, the focus will fall on an exposition of both tendencies in Psalm 139 research.

Additionally, research on the placement of Psalm 139 in Book V of the *Psalter* will be surveyed. Recent trends in psalm research suggest a move away from a solely literary- and form-critical approach to a redaction-critical approach. The latter, a relatively new movement in psalm research, will come under investigation in this chapter to illustrate to what ends the redaction-critical approach has played a role in the interpretation of Psalm 139, to date. The motivation for this study is the persuasion that all research concerning psalms should seriously consider the psalm's positioning within the *Psalter*. In this section, the focus will fall on an exposition of how the redaction-critical approach has thus far played its part in Psalm 139 research.

2.2.1 Unity and division of Psalm 139

It comes as no surprise that the unique character and structural division of Psalm 139 gives rise to extensive disagreement among scholars on how the unity of the Psalm should be understood. Converging speculation on how the structural unity of Psalm 139 should be understood is met with a variety of conflicting interpretations.

Research to date exhibits three main approaches to the structure and unity of Psalm 139. These three main approaches to Psalm 139 regarding its unity, includes:

- An argument for a two-part division of the text.
- An argument for a multi-division of the text.
- An argument for the unity of the text.

The first and most popular approach to Psalm 139 is that of a two-part division in the psalm. Proponents of this trend believe that the content of the psalm lends itself to two divergent motives and that two distinguishable themes are evident in the subject of the text. However, it is striking that scholars do not necessarily agree on how the psalm should be divided. What follows is an exposition of different scholars' differing two-part division of Psalm 139.

Clifford (2003:280) argues that even though a four-part stanza division is evident in the content of the psalm, Psalm 139 is more sensibly divided into two halves. This approach to the text argues for a division between verses 12 and 13, grouping the foregoing verses (vv. 1-12) and the following verses (vv. 13-24). According to this argument, the two parts of the psalm each reveal an experience or encounter with YHWH. In the first half of the psalm, consisting of verses 1-12, the psalmist has a first experience with YHWH as an omnipresent entity, permeating all of creation. This is a negative experience for the psalmist, as the psalmist is portrayed as imprisoned by YHWH's omniscience: "*You hem me in behind and before*"; "*You lay your hand upon me*". The language used in this half of the psalm attests to the psalmist's incarceration, against which the psalmist boldly protests. But then comes the second half of the psalm, consisting of verses 13-24, and God is finally revealed as the Creator of the psalmist who is deeply concerned with every stage of the psalmist's life. YHWH is

exposed as a deeply personal deity who is involved in humankind's well and woe. The psalmist finds consolation in this thought: "*How precious to me are your thoughts, God!*" Suddenly YHWH is no longer considered a prison guard, but rather a gatekeeper. The psalmist is no longer considered incarcerated, but simply sheltered by YHWH. Only after realising that God's action was well-meant, the psalmist comes to rest. With a grasp on God's action and goodness, the psalmist understands that every human has a role to play in the malice against God and the psalmist wilfully decides to side with this good God. This division of the text colours verses 1-12 as themed by YHWH's perfect knowledge of humankind, whereas verses 13-24 is themed by YHWH as a good God.

This division of the text of Psalm 139 is unique but remains unpopular among scholars. When confronted with the textual reality of the psalm, there is absolutely no structural foundation to support a break between verses 12 and 13. Allen (2002:323) supports this notion by inferring that the close connection between verses 1b through to verse 18 should not be considered minute and trivial. Verses 1b-18 is thematically connected by the omniscience, omnipresence and omnipotence of YHWH. These verses emphasise on YHWH's perfect knowledge of humankind. YHWH is portrayed as a God who is not only intimately acquainted with the actions of humankind, but who was also intimately involved in the creation of humankind. Ultimately YHWH knows humankind because YHWH created humankind. Collins (2003:281) partition of Psalm 139 suggests two main themes, namely: the knowledge of YHWH and the goodness of YHWH. These two themes, however accurately displayed, fails to fully account for the sudden outburst of anger towards the wicked. The psalmist disdain of the wicked does not comply with the mainstream thought that God is good. If God is good, why call on God to do something which is essentially not good, namely "*to slay the wicked*"?

A more general two-part division of the content of Psalm 139 is that of Würthwein (1957:169-170). This approach considers Psalm 139 as split into two individual but correlating parts, both of which assume the form of a prayer. The first prayer, consisting of verses 1-18, acknowledges YHWH's intimate knowledge of the psalmist. It is emphasised that there is nothing the psalmist can do that is not ultimately known by the Creator. The psalmist professes that human life is under the constant watchful eye of YHWH. This is not only an external familiarity: "*you know when I sit and when I*

rise”; “*you discern my going out and my lying down,*” but also an internal and personal familiarity: “*you created my inmost being.*” This first prayer is the prayer of a person who is fully aware that God’s presence is inescapable. The second prayer consisting of verses 19-24, takes on an entirely different tone to that of the first prayer. In the second prayer, the deepest concerns of the psalmist are expressed: “*They speak of you with evil intent, your adversaries misuse your name.*” The psalmist is distressed by people who are bloodthirsty and contemptuous towards God. In the conclusion of this two-part prayer, in verses 23-24, the psalmist appeals to YHWH’s perfect knowledge to investigate the psalmist’s intentions. This appeal of the psalmist to the foreknowledge of God binds the two separate prayers together as a coherent unit.

Another supporter of the two-part division between verses 18 and 19, is Kraus (1989:511) who asserts that a study of the psalm displays a noticeable change in the meter between verses 18 and 19. The 3+3 meter that dominates the psalm, is also present in verse 18. All of a sudden, the meter changes to 4+4 in verse 19. Together with the sudden change in rhythm, there is a clear inconsistency in the emotional impression of both parts. The calm and quiet emotional undertone of verses 1- 18 is disrupted by an agitated and noisy discourse in verses 19-24. The incompatibility of the meter, as well as the irreconcilable emotional impressions of the two separate parts, is a reason to consider a bi-part division of Psalm 139 between verses 18 and 19.

Gunkel & Begrich (1998:40) also assert their support for the two-part division of Psalm 139. True to Gunkel’s form-critical approach this division of Psalm 139 is based on the fact that the psalm cannot be classified under one single *genre*. While the first eighteen verses of Psalm 139 display all the characteristics of a hymn, the final six verses, in turn, exhibits all the traits of an “individual complaint song.”²¹ Anderson (1972:904) states that even though verses 1-18 can be divided under three separate themes among others: YHWH’s knowledge of the psalmist (vv. 1-6); YHWH’s omnipresence (vv. 7-12) and YHWH’s magnificent creation (vv. 13-18), the first eighteen verses of Psalm 139 is indicative of a hymn and should therefore, be grouped. Mowinckel (1992:75) takes a similar approach to the text asserting that the first eighteen verses

²¹ Gunkel & Begrich, 1998:121.

can be grouped. These first eighteen verses, in the form of worship, reflect on the relationship between the psalmist, a mere human being, and YHWH, the utmost Holy. This worship is then replaced by the psalmist plea to the fall of God's adversaries in the final six verses. The diverse emotional content of the psalm speaks to the varied personal experiences of the psalmist and consequently, two different *genres* can be assigned to these opposing emotional subject matter. Most commonly the first stanza (vv. 1-18) is classified as a hymn, while the second stanza (vv. 19-24) is classified as an individual lament.

With the exception of Clifford (2003:280) assuming a break in the text between verse 12 and verse 13, it seems clear that the consensus among scholars supporting the two-part division of Psalm 139, is that the text should be divided between verse 18 and verse 19. Conclusively a clear two-part division in the text cannot be contested. Within the text, there are at least two irremediable moods that require special attention when interpreting the psalm.

The second approach to the text of Psalm 139, as suggested by scholars, is to divide the psalm into a plurality of stanzas. Proponents of this trend believe that Psalm 139 lends itself to a multitude of stanzas, each representing its subject and theme. Once again, those who advocate for this stance does not agree on how the stanzas should be divided. What follows is an exposition of different scholars' differing multi-part division of Psalm 139.

According to Allen (2002:322), a four-part division of Psalm 139 has been widely maintained by scholars. The first stanza (vv. 1b-6) are paired together by the keyword ידע (to know), underlining YHWH's knowledge of the psalmist. This section concludes when the psalmist admits that YHWH's knowledge surpasses that of humankind.

The second stanza takes effect when the psalmist asks rhetoric questions pertaining to YHWH's all-encompassing presence. This theme is carried throughout verses 7-12 concluding with the thought that YHWH's eyes can even see through the darkness. A third stanza takes form in verse 13 with the theme of YHWH's intimate involvement in the creation of the psalmist. This line of thought is developed through verses 13-18,

concluding with praise to YHWH's perfect knowledge of the psalmist (reverberating the conclusion of the first stanza). These first three stanzas repeat the same tone and emotional context. Then the psalm concludes with a final stanza that dissents the tranquillity of the first three stanzas by petitioning YHWH to deal with evil-doers. The calmness of the foregoing stanzas is adhered to with the assertion of the psalmist's innocence in verses 23-24, concluding the psalm with a petition to God's knowledge.

The four-part division of Brueggemann & Bellinger (2014:582) mirrors that of Allen. This approach turns to the unique poetic styles revealed by each of the four units. The first unit consisting of verses 1-6 is simply an expansion of the opening line of the section "*You have searched me, Lord, and you know me.*" These verses thoroughly explain YHWH's probing of the psalmist's every action and thought conclusively expounding YHWH's knowledge of the entire life of the psalmist. God knows every movement and every thought of the psalmist, suggesting that the psalmist is the subject of divine attention. Furthermore, the "I-Thou" relationship between the psalmist and YHWH is accentuated by the excessive use of first- and second-person pronouns. The second unit, comprising of verses 7-12, is introduced by two rhetoric questions: "*Where can I go from your Spirit?*" and "*Where can I flee from your presence?*" These questions underline the psalmist's inability to evade YHWH. Using metaphoric language the divine presence is portrayed to the reader as stretching from "*the heavens*" to "*the depths*" and from "*the wings of the dawn*" to "*the far side of the sea.*" The third unit, comprising of verses 13-18 announces the omnipresence of YHWH by describing YHWH as present from before the psalmist's birth, utilising hyperbolic language. It continues by suggesting that YHWH knows all the days of the psalmist's life – those days that are already passed and those days that are still to come. All the days of the psalmist's life are written in the book of God. This section concludes with a hyperbolic exclamation that YHWH's thoughts about the psalmist are vast and endless. Finally, the fourth and final unit, verses 19-24, petitions YHWH's defeat of the psalmist's enemies with repetition as the binding poetic element of this section. The intimate relationship between YHWH and the psalmist which has been thoroughly developed by the first three units reaches a climax in the prayer of verses 19-24.

Though Van der Ploeg (1974:440) concedes that Psalm 139 can thematically be divided into two parts, he insists that the first eighteen verses stylistically divides into

three separate sections. This observation is based on the concluding thought to each section. The first section concludes with the words of verse 6 “*such knowledge is too wonderful for me.*” These words refer to the psalmist’s awe at the wonder of YHWH’s craft of creation. The psalmist exclaims admiration at what YHWH has skilfully created and purposefully maintained. The next section is concluded with the words of verse 13: “*for you created my inmost being.*” These words once again highlight YHWH’s mysterious creative works but are now applied to a personal level. The third section sums up the psalmist’s experience of YHWH as enigmatic though reassuring to some level, by concluding with the words of verses 17-18: “*how precious to me are your thoughts, God! How vast is the sum of them! Were I to count them, they would outnumber the grains of sand.*” All three above-mentioned concluding statements contemplate the complexity of YHWH. Based on what Van der Ploeg considers concluding statements, he asserts that each of the preceding sections describes an important attribute of YHWH.²² These characteristics are YHWH’s omniscience in verses 1-6, YHWH’s omnipresence in verses 7-13 and YHWH’s omnipotence in verses 14-18. According to this argument, verses 19-24 serves as a pinnacle to the psalm when the psalmist exclaims that the all-knowing, all-encompassing and almighty God is to scrutinise the heart and motives.²³

This stanza division differs from most scholars advocating a multi-division of Psalm 139, only at one point, and that is at the end of the second stanza and simultaneously at the beginning of the third stanza. Most scholars conclude that the second stanza should end with verse 12 and not verse 13. The reason being that verse 13 does not serve as a logical conclusion to the content of verses 7-12, which professes the psalmist’s inability to flee from YHWH. Verse 13 rather serves as an introduction to the next stanza which tells of YHWH’s intimate involvement in the psalmist’s person even before the psalmist’s birth.

A completely different light cast on the multi-division of Psalm 139 is that of Buttenwieser (1938:534-536). According to this approach verses 19-22 should be

²² Van der Ploeg, 1974:440.

²³ To this notion Sutton (2019:11) adds that Psalm 139 should be read on both a theological as well as an anthropological level. The first three stanzas thus serve as illustration of divine action, while the fourth stanza concludes with the implication of divine action on the human experience.

regarded as foreign elements in Psalm 139 because of the different language, style and tone as opposed to the rest of the psalm. It is argued that the aggressive content of verses 19-22 fails to correlate to the harmonious subject matter of verses 1-18 and 23-24, and therefore tarnishes the unity of Psalm 139. According to Buttenwieser verses 19-20 originally belonged to Psalm 140 in between verses 12 and 13, while verses 21-22 were supposedly placed in between verses 4 and 5 in Psalm 141.²⁴ By omission, in the course of transmission, both verses 19-20 and 21-22 has been wrongfully inserted into Psalm 139.

This is not the only error perceived by Buttenwieser, for he adds that the placement of verses 13-14 is another *faux pas*.²⁵ According to this notion, verses 13-14 belongs to the content, style and tone verses 1-6. The correct position of verses 13-14 would be in between verses 5 and 6 because verse 5 displays a disruption in the progression to verse 6. To ensure a meaningful flow in the thought process, it is argued that the content of verses 13-14 supposedly fills the gap between YHWH holding the psalmist and the psalmist being overwhelmed by YHWH's intimate knowledge.

Taking into consideration Buttenwieser's reservations about the text of Psalm 139, the psalm is still divided into four stanzas. The first stanza consists of verses 1-6 with the addition of verses 13-14 after verse 5. This edited stanza speaks to YHWH's intimate knowledge of the psalmist on two levels: the first an external knowledge of the psalmist's movements; the second an internal knowledge of the psalmist's innermost being. Stanza two follows with verses 7-12, colouring the psalmist's wonder at the reassuring realisation that YHWH is everywhere. The third stanza picks up at verses 15-18 in which the psalmist conveys consciousness of the mystery of human existence – the formation of the human being in the mother's lap. Finally, the fourth stanza consists only of verses 23-24. In these final verses, the psalmist realises that the only way to feel assured in YHWH's presence is if one lives a righteous life. Therefore, the psalmist invites YHWH's scrutiny.

²⁴ Buttenwieser, 1938:535.

²⁵ Buttenwieser, 1938:536.

Weiser (1962:802-808) suggests a five-part division of Psalm 139, rather than a four-part division. The layout of the first three stanzas, according to this approach, is similar to that of Allen (2002:322) and Brueggemann & Bellinger (2014:582). The point in difference takes place at the last stanza. Weiser (1962:807) does not consider verses 19-24 as one unit with one comprehensive theme, but rather that it should be divided into two separate stanzas: verses 19-22 and verses 23-24.

In keeping with Weiser's approach, each stanza further develops the theme of personal experience with God and each thought-sequence stands in an inward relationship with each other and consecutively displays the psalmist's developing thoughts on YHWH's involvement in human life.²⁶ Verses 1-6 speak of YHWH's searching eye which rests on the psalmist's every movement. The author of Psalm 139 voices the realisation of a person that is thoroughly aware that the human being is involved in relations which surpasses the physical existence of this world. In realisation of the supremacy of YHWH's knowledge, the psalmist can simply turn to awe and wonder of God. In verses 7-12 the psalmist comes yet to another realisation: there is no escape from YHWH's presence. Not only is YHWH fully aware of the psalmist's movements, but YHWH is also present with every such move being made. Wherever the human being thinks to flee, YHWH is already there. This is followed by verses 13-18. In these verses, the psalmist gives up trying to flee from YHWH's knowledge and presence. Instead, the psalmist takes a completely different approach of turning to God and placing complete trust in the One from whom not even the psalmist's creation was hidden. Turning to verses 19-22, there follows an abrupt petition to the destruction of the wicked. This utterance once again builds on the first three stanzas by invoking YHWH's omniscience and omnipresence to purify the psalmist of all wicked elements that could be a hindrance to the psalmist's worship of YHWH. Finally, Psalm 139 concludes with a fifth stanza, verses 23-24, in which the psalmist's limitations is recognised. There is a sense of surrender, when the psalmist petitions to be scrutinised and purified by YHWH for service to YHWH – the all-knowing, ever-present God to which the psalmist has now fully committed.

²⁶ Weiser, 1962:802.

For Goulder (1998:242-247), another advocate for the five-part division of Psalm 139, the distinction between the fourth and fifth stanzas is important, because it illustrates the psalmist's intent and the motive for writing the psalm. In the fourth stanza (vv. 19-22) the wicked are described as enemies of YHWH. YHWH is called upon to hold these perpetrators or evil-doers accountable and to deal with them according to God's sovereign will. The fifth stanza (vv. 23-24), however, distinguishes the psalmist from these perpetrators by calling on the psalmist's righteousness. An emphasis is placed on the existing relationship between YHWH and the psalmist, characterising the psalmist as a friend of God, rather than an enemy. The psalmist stands opposed to the evil-doers and therewith invokes special treatment from YHWH.

Another five-part division of Psalm 139 is that of Weber (2003:341-342). According to this partition of the text Psalm 139 consists of four main stanzas of more or less similar length with noticeably short, but impactful final stanza. This exposition of the text emphasises that verses 19-22 play a cardinal role in the conception of the text as a whole and should be taken into consideration when interpreting the psalm. These verses, even though they seem out of place, cannot be separated from the rest of the psalm. Contrary to other multi-divisions of Psalm 139, Weber's division of the text places verses 19-22 together with the preceding verses 17-18. In verses, 19-22 accusations brought against the psalmist are raised. However, it is evident from the preceding verses that the allegations raised are unjustified. Reading verses 19-22 together with the preceding verses 17-18 initiates the idea that the psalmist does not appeal to innocence, but rather petitions the omniscience of YHWH whose thoughts are "*precious*" and "*vast*". This argument is further substantiated by the two closing verses (vv. 23-24) which makes it clear that the psalmist does not rely on virtuousness but completely surrenders to God's inspection and guidance in "*the way everlasting*". Weber's perception of the text leads to the following stanza division: Stanza I – verses 1-6; stanza II – verses 7-12; stanza III – verses 13-16; stanza IV – verses 17-22; stanza V – verses 23-24.²⁷

As far as a multi-division of Psalm 139 are concerned, it becomes clear that there are many differences as well as differentiating expositions of the text. However, what

²⁷ Weber, 2003:343.

becomes quite clear from such multi-divisions of the text, is that verses 19-22 remains a stumbling block in the interpretation of the psalm. Scholars remain uncertain as to how verses 19-22 should be reconciled with the overall delineation of Psalm 139.

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

Dahood (1970:284) is one of the fierce defenders of this faction. He explicitly accentuates the plea repeated in verse 1: “*You have searched me*” as well as verses 23-24: “*search me, God, and know my heart.*” This plea serves not only as an introduction to the psalm but also as a final appeal with which the psalm is concluded. Thus, the petition of the psalm and the reason for the writing of the psalm is summed up in the repeated call on YHWH to examine the psalmist. However, what is written in between this *inclusio* is of importance to the reader. The whole of Psalm 139 is riddled with ideas and concepts on the knowledge and foreknowledge of YHWH. By describing these attributes of YHWH, the psalmist continues in reflection upon the sagacity of YHWH. The psalmist, therefore, bases an appeal to YHWH’s scrutiny on the bases of YHWH’s all-encompassing knowledge. The psalm ensues with the claim that YHWH has already searched the psalmist. What follows is an analytical exposition of how YHWH supposedly already knows the psalmist. Conclusively, the psalmist pleads YHWH to start the search all over again, wilfully subjecting the self to the perfect knowledge of God. According to this argument, Psalm 139 is a deliberately structured unity that relies on cautiously structured words and masterfully pieced together concepts.

Holman (1971:299) strongly objects to any strophic structure awarded to Psalm 139. It is debated that any strophic structure fails to explain the major transition between verse 18 and 19 as opposed to the undemanding transitions between the other stanzas. It is asserted that even though Psalm 139 consists of two parts of special importance (vv. 1-18 and 19-24), these two parts cannot be separated from each other as separate compositions. Holman sets out to prove the unity of the text by applying literary criteria to substantiate the unity of the literary form.²⁸ The first such literary

²⁸ Holman, 1971:300-310.

criteria which prove the unity of Psalm 139, is the use of so-called catchwords – words that serve as verbal links between the two sections. In verse 1b we find the word **יִחְקְרֵנִי** (you search me) and in verse 23 **יִחְקְרֵנִי** (you must search me!) In verses 2 and 4 we read **יָדַעְתָּ** (you know), and in verse 23 **וְיָדַע** (and you must know!). Verse 3 presents the reader with the word **דְרָכַי** (my ways) while in verse 24 we find the words **דְרָכֶיךָ** (way of) as well as **בְּדַרְכֶיךָ** (in the way). In addition to the repetition of these catchwords, we find the name **יהוה** (YHWH) repeated in verses 1b, 4 and 21. The recurrence of these words proves without a doubt that an *inclusio* is formed between the first and last few verses of Psalm 139, indefinitely binding the psalm together as a coherent unit. It is further asserted that the characteristic vocabulary of verse 2 announces and serves as an introduction to verses 1-18. In verse 2 the verbs **שָׁבַתִּי** (my sit down) and **וַקִּימוּנִי** (my rise up) initiates the use of various sets of verbs, throughout verses 1-18, which expresses YHWH's omnipresence in the light of the human's inability to escape this holy presence. The verbs used in verse 2 is broken up into merisms, as is the case in verses 1-18. While verse 2 introduces the section of the psalm that is primarily preoccupied with God's knowledge and the psalmist's endeavours to escape from God, the vocabulary of verse 3 introduces the psalmist's stance on good moral behaviour. Verse 3 leads with the hypothesis that YHWH is familiar with the psalmist's conduct. Similarly, verses 19-24 is coloured by thoughts on how the psalmist behaves as opposed to how the wicked behaves. These literary criteria, according to Holman serves as proof of the unity of Psalm 139.²⁹

To argue the unity of Psalm 139, Terrien (2003:875) turns to the strophic structure of the text and applies structural integrity to the discussion of textual unity. It is asserted that even though there is a clear four-part divide in the psalm, the symmetry of the four strophes indicates and underlines the literary coherence and unity of Psalm 139. Each of the four strophes is introduced by a single colon (vv. 1, 7, 13 and 19) that serves as a title to the thought content of the concerned strophe. Strophe I consist of verses 1-6 and speaks of YHWH's all-encompassing knowledge of humankind. Strophe II comprised of verses 7-12 examines the all-pervading presence of YHWH. Strophe III

²⁹ Holman, 1971:302.

consisting of verses 13-18 portrays the great and complex creation of the ever so trivial humankind. Finally, strophe IV comprised of verses 19-24 concludes with the ongoing scrutiny of humankind by the magnificent Creator. This is followed by sub-strophes of three bicola verses (vv. 2-4, 8-10, 14-16, 20-22) and concluded with either the use of bicola verses in strophy I (vv. 5-6) and IV (vv. 23-24) or the use of a combination of bicola and tricola verses in strophy II (vv. 11-12) and III (vv. 23-24). Terrien summarises that the four strophes share a corresponding symmetry which points towards literary consistency and the harmony of the text.³⁰ The varying metre of Psalm 139 is ascribed to the psalmist's emotional fluctuations and not to a plurality of authors.

Peels (2008:36) also appeals to the unity of Psalm 139 by insisting that verses 21-22 play an integral role in understanding the psalm. He denies that the statement of hatred in verses 21-22 is corrected by the prayer in verses 24-23 which expresses the insecurities of the psalmist. The exclamation of anger and hatred so distinctly portrayed in verses 21-22 must not be minimised in value to the understanding of the preceding verses. According to this argument verses 21-22 is not in dissonance with the harmonious tone of the foregoing verses. Semantically the word **שׂוֹנֵא** (hatred) should not be conceived as a play on emotion but should be understood as the psalmist taking a standpoint for the God that is deemed worthy of dependence. The outline of a God worthy of the psalmist's honour and dependence portrayed in verses 1-20, is only further enhanced by the statement of radical hatred in verses 21-22. Thus, these verses serve to emphasise the foregoing line of thought, and does not contradict the psalmist's stance in verses 1-20.

The foregoing study explored the multiple ways in which the unity of Psalm 139 is explained. When analysing the unity of Psalm 139, there are mainly three trends adhered to. Supporters of the first trend insist on a clear-cut two-part division of Psalm 139. Though followers of this trend primarily defend a two-part division in between verses 18 and 19, some suggest a division elsewhere in the text. Studying Psalm 139 it becomes apparent that, when based on the foundation of the subject, the content of the text leans toward the first mentioned text division, with each part lending itself to a unique motive. Although this notion is disputed by advocates of the other trends, it

³⁰ Terrien, 2003:875.

cannot be denied that Psalm 139 exhibits two anomalous parts (vv. 1-18 and 19-24), each displaying its theme. However, adherents to this approach to Psalm 139 do little to explain the incompatible tones present in the psalm, but rather widens the severance between the verses 1-18 and 19-24 by insisting that each part consists of its theme and *genre*.

Proponents of the second trend favour a division of a plurality of stanzas, each representing a unique subject and theme. The main hindrance to this approach to Psalm 139, is the fact that each scholar suggests his/her division and layout of the text. Due to the general disagreement amongst scholars as to how the stanzas should be divided, this trend fails to explain the uniqueness of the transition between verses 18 and 19 and also fails to remediate the contradictory subjects of verses 1-18 and 19-24.

The third and final trend concerning the unity and/or division of Psalm 139, is that the psalm should be considered as a respective unit. This trend is mainly based on the *inclusio* formed with verses 1 and 23-24. This trend again fails to clarify the diverging tones within the psalm and does not account for the radical transition between verses 18 and 19.

From the above exposition on the structural division of Psalm 139, it becomes undeniably clear that not one of the three approaches regarding the psalm's unity can fully account for the discrepancies in the text and that a purely literary-critical approach to the text is not sufficient when attempting to understand the unity of Psalm 139.

2.2.2 Psalm 139 and its colourful *genre* allotments

As opposed to scholars that prefer a literary-critical approach to discern the unity of Psalm 139, another faction prefers to take a form-critical approach to the interpretation of the psalm. This Gunkel-inspired approach to any text gives precedence to the *genre* of the text for it was the firm conviction of Gunkel that all research in psalm studies must be built on the foundation of the *genre* (Gunkel & Begrich, 1998:5). The *genre* thus forms the groundwork on which all research must be established. Consequently, discerning the *genre* of a psalm aids in understanding the meaning of the psalm.

In this regard, Psalm 139 remains unique in the *Psalter*, for scholars has thus far been unable to classify the psalm under any one of the traditional *genres*. It is not simply that scholars struggle to classify Psalm 139 under a specific *genre*, those who did venture their hand in the classification of Psalm 139 cannot seem to agree on which *genre* Psalm 139 belongs to. All sorts of classifications have been made: hymn, individual lament, a song of thanksgiving, wisdom psalm, etc.

For proponents of the form-critical faction of Psalm 139, the inconclusiveness surrounding the specific *genre* of the psalm has far-reaching consequences. This restrains the understanding of Psalm 139 as it prevents the psalm from being studied within the boundaries of an original context.

The dispute surrounding the *genre* of Psalm 139 is a result of two factors: First, Psalm 139 exhibits a mixed form – characteristics of more than one *genre* can be identified in the psalm. Second, a definite *Sitz im Leben* regrettably remains unknown to scholars due to a lack of historical indicators in the text.

For a long time, the preferred *genre* identification for Psalm 139 was that of a hymn, since Gunkel & Begrich suggested that the psalm mainly consists of hymnal elements.³¹ These elements include:

- a proclamation of the mighty deeds of YHWH:
The psalmist indisputably declares the all-mighty, all-knowing faculties of YHWH in verses 1-18.
- an emphatic proposition as an introduction to the rest of the psalm:
In Psalm 139 the psalmist starts with an emphatic statement of YHWH's knowledge: "*You have searched me, Lord, and you know me.*"
- an expansion of the introduction throughout the rest of the text:

³¹ Gunkel & Begrich, 1998:22-47.

The line of thought initiated in verse 1 is further pursued and emphatically exerted by expounding how well YHWH knows the psalmist.

- an appeal to the collective praise of YHWH combined with an overt declaration of the psalmist's personal desire to praise YHWH:

In verse 14 the psalmist pronounces a personal motivation to praise YHWH as "*I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made...*" The psalmist own creation gives rise to an appreciation of YHWH. The reader is subsequently called to join in the psalmist admiration and praise of YHWH.

- the main character as YHWH:

In Psalm 139 there is referenced to God as "YHWH" (vv. 1, 4 and 21), as "EI" (vv. 17 and 23) and as "Elohim" (v. 19). In addition to the psalm being addressed to YHWH throughout it is observed that the perfect and imperfect 2nd person male singular verb occurs nine times referring to YHWH's actions, along with the pronominal suffixes 2nd person male singular which occurs sixteen times referring to YHWH. As a result, it could be assumed that YHWH is portrayed as the main character in the psalm.

- something extraordinary about YHWH over which the psalmist rejoices:

In verses 17-18 the psalmist praises YHWH's thoughts as something exceptional.

- a request:

In verses 23-24 the psalmist requests to be searched by YHWH and to be led in an everlasting way.

- a basic mood of amazement and enthusiasm:

Both these elements are present in the manner in which the psalmist describes YHWH's omnipotence and omnipresence.

However accurately Psalm 139 can be correlated to the characteristics of a hymn, this classification only seems to account for verses 1-18 and 23-24, while verses 19-22 seems to be excluded and wilfully ignored. None of the characteristics of a hymn can

account for the sudden outburst of anger and resentment in these few verses. On the contrary, verses 19-22 much rather contradicts the basic mood of the psalm. No longer is the psalmist filled with amazement and enthusiasm about YHWH. Now the mood is dominated by hatred for an unknown enemy. All of a sudden, the focus is shifted away from YHWH, the main character, and focus is placed on an unknown enemy who has not been previously introduced in the psalm.

For a long time ‘hymn’ was the designated *genre* classification of Psalm 139. This classification of the psalm remained dominant for the reason that this was the only *genre* that sufficiently described the overriding mood of Psalm 139. However, when scholars identified that hymn is the *genre* classification for Psalm 139 it neglects to do justice to the negative undertones of verses 19-22, a new approach was devised – the ‘divide and conquer’ approach. To deal with this dissonance in the text, scholars resolved to separate verses 19-22 from the whole and classify it under a different and appropriate *genre* (Wagner, 1978:358).³²

Following the ‘divide and conquer’ approach to the psalm, Eaton (1967:301) concedes that Psalm 139 depicts elements of a hymn, but makes an argument that verses 1-18 only serves as a hymnic preparation for the prayer that is to follow in verses 19-22, pleading the elimination of the psalmist’s adversaries. He argues that verses 1-18 serve only in a preparatory capacity to the prayer that is to follow in verses 19-22. According to this argument, the beautifully worded verses 1-18 is only a means to an end, that end being the prayer that God would remove all evil-doers. To Eaton, the goal of Psalm 139 is the prayer that God would eliminate the immoral for the psalmist to be rid of their negative influence.³³ Following the prayer, that forms the focal point of the psalm, verses 23-24 links up with the preparatory hymn, requesting the good God of verses 1-18 to examine the psalmist’s loyalty toward YHWH as opposed to that of the wicked. The words of verses 23-24 confirm the psalmist’s eagerness to be scrutinised by YHWH and maintain the notion that verses 19-22 is a prayer to the

³² It should be noted as Gunkel & Begerich (1998:60) does specify that the hymn-*genre* plays a significant role in mixed psalms. Mixed psalms are psalms that consist of more than one *genre*. This type of psalm often starts with a hymn as introduction or finishes with hymn as the conclusion to the mixed psalm. In both Pss. 90 and 139 the scope of the hymn corresponds to that of a lamentation. Thus, Gunkel has already identified Ps. 139 as a non-pure hymn.

³³ Eaton, 1967: 302.

advantage of the psalmist. Consequently, this argument asserts that Psalm 139 is to be read and understood as one-part hymn – a hymn of preparation for a person preparing to be searched and examined by YHWH – and one-part prayer – a prayer of supplication in which the psalmist finally submits to the scrutiny of YHWH.

In addition to the *genre* of Psalm 139, Eaton (2003:459) also ventures a hand in the *Sitz im Leben* of the psalm. He points out that the heading of Psalm 139 לְדָוִד מְזֻמָּר לְמִנְצֵחַ (For the director of music, of David, a psalm) suggests that the speaker and/or performer of the psalm is in fact, a king.³⁴ This proposition is further strengthened by the psalmist aggressively taking a stance against the wicked by claiming them to be the enemies of YHWH and thus enemies of the throne as well. This god-and-king relationship, wherein any action directed against the god is also action directed against the king, is a motive that is present in certain Egyptian hymns.³⁵ Eaton points out the similarity between the god-and-king relationship in Egyptian hymns and that of Psalm 139, proposing a *Sitz im Leben* of a king taking a stance against the enemies of his god.³⁶

As opposed to Eaton, Dahood (1970:284) is unwavering in his position that Psalm 139 was written by a person occupying a religious position in the community. The psalm was theoretically written by this religious leader as a plea of innocence after being charged with the violation of idol worship. This argument is based on the introduction (v. 1) and the conclusion (v. 23) to the psalm, in which the psalmist petitions YHWH's scrutiny. The psalmist bases this request on YHWH's omniscience. It is emphasised that based on YHWH's all-knowing capacities, YHWH is the only One that can search

³⁴ Pss. 16, 17 and 63 takes on a similar form to that of Ps. 139. For Eaton (2003:459) this indicates that Ps. 139 is the words of a king bringing his plea before YHWH to strengthen him in the face of the onslaught of his foes.

³⁵ The relationship between god and king in ancient Egypt becomes evident in the Hymn to Aten, to which Ps. 139 bares striking resemblance. This hymn was composed to illustrate the relationship Akhenaten had with the sun disc, Aten. In this hymn Aten's omnipresence is honoured: "...your rays embrace the lands as far as everything you have made..." and his creative works are admired: "...you create the earth as you wish...". Even Aten's presence in the underworld is praised: "...in the underworld you make a Nile that you may bring it forth as you wish..." Aten is also depicted as the creator of life in the mother's womb: "...you nurse in the womb, giving breath to nourish all that has been begotten..." (Simpson, 2003:278-283).

³⁶ Eaton, 2003:459.

the psalmist. Subsequently, YHWH is also the only One to cast judgement on the psalmist's actions that most probably took place in private, because a religious leader would most likely refrain from defying the laws of his religion in public and contain any such misconduct to the privacy of his own home. The rest of Psalm 139 is furnished according to the premise of YHWH's all-knowing capabilities. Verses 2-6 consists of a thorough exposition of YHWH's knowledge and foreknowledge of the psalmist. In verses 7-12 the universality of YHWH's presence is articulated, once again confirming the impossibility of YHWH not knowing. The next stanza (vv. 13-16) portrays YHWH as Creator and as a result, imply YHWH's perfect knowledge of the human being. Finally, verses 17-22 concludes with the psalmist's confession of faith in YHWH's ability to see all and know all, to which the psalmist finally submits in verses 23-24. According to this approach, Psalm 139 is a psalm of innocence, written solely to appeal to the magnificence of YHWH, in the face of a false charge. However, this approach did not contribute much to the understanding of the *genre* of Psalm 139, it did add to the understanding of a possible *Sitz im Leben* of the text.

This *Sitz im Leben* was supported by Mowinckel (1992:91), who took a slightly different tactic to the text of Psalm 139. He suggested that a psalm should be interpreted, not based on theological content, but rather regarding a concrete situation. By this standard, even though Psalm 139 is read as a reflection on the omnipresence and omniscience of YHWH, it is not what the psalm aims to communicate. To understand a psalm, one must first acknowledge that each psalm is communicated from a definite situation. In Psalm 139 the psalmist attempts to persuade YHWH using a celebration of YHWH's all-knowing and all-mighty capacities. When the reader, therefore, listens to the emotions of the psalm, the real motivation behind the writing of the psalm will reveal itself. According to this approach, Mowinckel affirms verses 1-18 to take on the *genre* of a hymn to exalt YHWH, while verses 19-22 takes on the *genre* of an individual lament which have the purpose of expressing the innocence of the person that is reciting the psalm.³⁷

Allen (2002:323) notes that the psalm is addressed to YHWH, from beginning to end. On this basis, he asserts that the psalm should be read and understood as an

³⁷ Mowinckel, 1992:91.

individual prayer. Prayer, however, does not always consist of one mood or tone. In a single prayer, every possible emotion can present itself. While the first part of the psalm exerts an emotion of awe, wonder and tranquillity, the passionate outburst of verses 19-24 is coloured with the emotion of someone rebelling against some form of oppression. As a result, verses 19-24 has all the characteristics of an individual lament. The plea in verse 19 that is underscored by a negative undertone is one such characteristic of an individual lament.³⁸ Another such characteristic of an individual lament is a double petition, which can be found in verses 19-22 “*if only you, God, would slay the wicked!*” and verses 23-24 “*search me, God, and know my heart.*”³⁹ Furthermore, verses 21-22 consists of a clear assertion of innocence,⁴⁰ yet another trademark of an individual lament. The portion that precedes verses 19-24 takes on the form of meditation with certain hymnic features. Such hymnic features include the rhetoric questions of verses 7 and 17, the praise of YHWH’s works in verses 14 and 17 and YHWH’s creation in verses 13, 15-16. Allen, however, disagrees that verses 1-18 can be classified as a hymn because certain elements of a hymn are also absent in these verses.⁴¹ For him, there is no definite introduction to the content matter of the psalm as well as a lack of subjectivity of treatment. Additionally, it is conceded that in a psalm with a mixed *genre*, one of the *genres* is always subordinate to the other. In this particular case, the meditation with hymnic undertones of verses 1-18 is outranked by the individual lament of verses 19-24.

This approach to Psalm 139 follows one of the earliest attempts at a *genre* classification of Psalm 139 by Würthwein (1957:169). This approach acknowledges that Psalm 139 consists of two conspicuous parts, but insists that both parts take on the form and tone of personal prayer, thus both parts of the psalm belong to the same *genre*. The first part of this personal prayer, consisting of verses 1-18, which is generally classified as a hymn, is the psalmist’s declaration of YHWH’s pre-eminence. The psalmist is content with the inability to escape YHWH’s hand or eye. In the second part of the prayer the psalmist now banks on the same God described in the first part of the prayer, to intervene in a current situation. Würthwein also points out that the first

³⁸ The morbidity of v. 19 is mirrored in other individual laments, such as Ps. 17:13-14 and Ps. 74:22-23.

³⁹ Other examples include Ps. 5:11-12 and Ps. 35:26-27.

⁴⁰ Cf. Ps. 6:8-9

⁴¹ Allen, 2002:323.

and second prayers are linked together with the use of the terms “*know*” and “*search*” that is repeated in verses 1 and 23.⁴² To him this repetition is crucial, pointing out that even though exegetes find it difficult to reconcile verses 1-18 with verses 19-24, these different parts are two pieces of a whole prayer that cannot be separated from each other. As for the *Sitz im Leben*, Würthwein dares to propose that the setting of the psalm is that of a cultic court case⁴³ in which the innocence of the accused must still be established. The psalmist turns to YHWH, in this personal prayer, to recognise the incorruptibility of the psalmist. Although this maintains the unity of the psalm, it still divides the psalm into two separate parts to meaningfully deal with the differing underlying tones within the psalm, thus it echoes a ‘divide and conquer’ approach. This interpretation is favoured among scholars and is still determinative in the exposition of the text of Psalm 139.

As for the *Sitz im Leben* of Psalm 139, Allen (2002:324) suggests false indictment. The psalm is an assertion of the psalmist’s innocence in the face of daunting false accusations. This derivation is made with the primary focus of the psalm on the individual complaint and prayer of verses 19-24 that is prefaced by a meditation on the divine attributes (vv. 1-18) that would serve to aid the psalmist in this current predicament.

Brueggemann & Bellinger (2014:581-582) identifies with this exposition, noting that the setting of Psalm 139 is exposed by the words of verses 19-24. In these words, there is a strong sense of an appeal against false accusations. When reading these words, it becomes clear that there is some form of antagonism directed towards the psalmist, against which the psalmist appeals. The psalmist presumably goes to a holy place to assert innocence and plead to YHWH – the One who takes notice of

⁴² Würthwein, 1957:169.

⁴³ Clifford (2003:279) colourfully explains the course of such a cultic court case in which innocence is still to be established by relating the proceedings of such a case to the test of an unfaithful wife similar to that of Nm. 5:11-31. In such a court case, in which innocence is not yet established, the procedure is as follows: The accused transgressor would be brought to the temple to come in front of the priest, who will compel the accused to drink a mixture of holy water mixed with dust from the tabernacle floor, whilst the innocent swears virtuousness. The effects of the mixture on the person will reveal innocence or guilt. If the mixture resulted in the person feeling ill, it would be taken as a sign of the person’s culpability. Conversely, if the mixture had no effect on the person, it would underline the person’s incorruptibility.

everything. The foregoing verses (vv. 1-18) creates the context for the petition, illustrating God as the only Creator and Judge of the creation. This notion is strengthened by verse 1: *יְהוָה חִקְרָתָנִי וַתֵּדָעַע*: (You have searched me, Lord, and you know me), depicting YHWH as a divine judge. The psalmist does not only come before YHWH to object to these false accusations, but to ask YHWH's assistance in the defeat of these enemies. Although verses 1-18 displays certain hymnic elements, the final unit (vv. 19-24) sets the tone for the whole psalm and should be conclusive in the determining of the *genre* of the psalm.

It is Peel's (2008:40) firm belief that an understanding of Psalm 139 can only result from a clear understanding of the *genre* of the psalm. It is his keen observation that verses 19-24 has thus far been considered the key to unlocking the meaning of the psalm. Viewing Psalm 139 through the lenses of verses 19-24 results in the psalm being understood as a prayer against persecution. The plea of verses 19-20 to the detriment of enemies creates the impression of someone's retaliation after their life has been threatened by false accusations. A logical conclusion for most scholars is that the form of persecution is most likely a charge of idolatry,⁴⁴ which the innocent person opposes by grounding their innocence in YHWH's superior knowledge. From this perspective Psalm 139 is most likely regarded as a confession of innocence and accordingly falls into the *genre* classifications: song of innocence or individual complaint. Peels dispute the credibility of this theory by asserting three arguments.⁴⁵ First, in Psalm 139 there is no specific charge brought against the psalmist. The lack of an allegation resulted in no real declaration of innocence being made. It follows that the psalmist is not necessarily asserting blamelessness with Psalm 139. Second, there is no clear threat to the life of the psalmist. Never does the psalmist pray for deliverance from personal enemies, instead the psalmist takes a stance against the enemies of YHWH in verse 21: "*Do I not hate those who hate you, Lord, and abhor those who are in rebellion against you?*" The enemies mentioned are thus only the enemies of the psalmist by proxy. Finally, the psalm does not take on a cultic setting but rather emulates a reflective meditation on the perfect knowledge of YHWH. For

⁴⁴ The word *עִצָּב* in v. 24 can be translated with either 'hardship' or 'idol'. For most scholars the latter inventively hints towards idol worship as the basis for persecution.

⁴⁵ Peels, 2008:40-42.

Peels, the *genre* of Psalm 139 is much rather defined by the sapiential motives colouring of the psalm. Although this exposition does not contribute much to the placement of Psalm 139 within a specific *genre*, it does however illuminate the shortcomings in the current *genre* and *Sitz im Leben* classifications. Peels acknowledges the bi-part division of the psalm but postulates that where most scholars determine the *genre* of Psalm 139 from the context of verses 19-24, the *genre* should much rather be determined from the viewpoint of the wisdom motives in verses 1-18.⁴⁶

Anderson (1972:904) similarly acknowledges that verses 1-18 are evocative of a hymn while verses 19-24 takes the form and tone of an individual lament, but stands firm on the unity of the psalm, and thus endeavours to define a *genre* that encapsulates the whole of Psalm 139, albeit cautiously. Once again, the notion is made that most *genre* bids are deduced from verse 23, which petitions YHWH to inspect the accused's heart and to dissect the accused's motives. From this viewpoint, the psalmist is not yet searched by YHWH, but eagerly petitions such scrutiny to affirm innocence. Such an approach would subsequently result in an individual lament being the designated *genre* classification of Psalm 139. However, Anderson infers his *genre* bid from the introductory verse, verse 1, in which the appellant resolutely asserts that YHWH already did an inspection.⁴⁷ Hence, an inspection is not appealed to, for such an inspection already took place. For this reason, the psalm can now be classified as an individual thanksgiving offered to YHWH for acquitting the psalmist from any accusations. This *genre* classification befits the psalm's unusual structure, for individual thanksgiving psalms makes a habit of recounting past troubles, similar to the troubles stated in verses 19-22.

Goldingay (2008:628) disagrees with the notion that Psalm 139 is a psalm protesting the innocence of a person victimised by indicters.⁴⁸ The observation is made that there

⁴⁶ Peels, 2008:42.

⁴⁷ Anderson 1972:904.

⁴⁸ According to Goldingay (2008:628) if indeed Ps. 139 is to be read and understood as a cry for help from a person wrongfully accused, it is reasonable to assume that the contents of the psalm is of a serious personal nature. The sheer intimacy of the psalmist's well and woe that is uncovered by the raw emotion in the psalm. This naturally leads to the conclusion that this psalm would not be used by the psalmist unless there is some sort of accusation brought against the psalmist that threatens the well-being of the one praying these words.

is no definite declaration of innocence as displayed by other psalms of a similar nature.⁴⁹ As a result of a lack of a declaration of innocence, it remains impossible to categorically determine that Psalm 139 was specifically written for/by a person wronged by false accusations. Goldingay contributes to the ongoing debate about the *genre* and *Sitz im Leben* of Psalm 139 by suggesting that the psalm was used as a prayer to stress the psalmist's general commitment against acts of disobedience directed towards YHWH.⁵⁰ This generalisation of the text opens up the *Sitz im Leben* of Psalm 139 to befit a private as well as a religious context. Simultaneously, Psalm 139 can categorically be placed in the wisdom psalm collection for communicating the wise notion that a person should side with YHWH.

Goulder (1998:240) insists that Psalm 139 is to be read and understood as an evening psalm with political undertones. To this effect, he adds a broad spectrum of references used to imply a night time setting. These references include: רבע (lying down)', יצע (make bed)' and חשך (darkness)⁵¹ The words and phrases chosen by the psalmist point to a setting that is thoughtfully placed amidst the darkness of night. This skilfully interwoven night time phrasing implies that there is no escape from YHWH. Not even the darkness is sufficient to hide the psalmist from the piercing eyes of the Almighty. This, however, is not considered in a negative light but provides the psalmist with the comfort of always being guarded under YHWH's watchful eye. Goulder presumes Psalm 139 to have been written during the time that Jerusalem was only partially rebuilt, which makes the psalmist a reformist Jewish religious leader, while the enemy of verse 19 and 20 רשע (wicked) points to the Judean governor who abate divine Jewish law by enforcing alien religious law on the land.⁵² The psalmist is thus just in

⁴⁹ Examples of innocence claims include: Ps. 17:3 "you will find that I have planned no evil"; Ps. 26:1 "vindicate me, Lord, for I have led a blameless life"; Ps. 69:4 "those who hate me without reason."

⁵⁰ Goldingay, 2008:626-628.

⁵¹ According to Goulder (1998:240) this evening setting runs through the entire psalm. The introduction in v. 2 אַתָּה יָדַעְתָּ שְׁבִתִּי וְקוּמִי (You know when I sit and when I rise) implies that YHWH knows when the psalmist lays down to rest as well as when exactly the psalmist rises in the morning. Furthermore, in v. 8 וְאַצִּיעָה שְׂאוֹל הַנֶּגֶד (if I make my bed in the depths) the psalmist even considers making a bed in Sheol. It is also implied that the psalmist wants to be covered by the darkness of the night in order to hide away from YHWH in v. 11 וְאִמַּר אֶדְרֹחַשְׁךָ יְשׁוּפְנֵי (if I say surely the darkness will hide me).

⁵² Goulder, 2008:241.

the prayer to abolish the ‘wicked’ Judean governor and his underlings וְאֲנָשֵׁי דָמִים (the men of blood) while asking YHWH to be searched to secure the knowledge that the psalmist is not breaking any divine Jewish law. This exposition of the text presumes a political background to the content of Psalm 139. Goulder cautiously suggests that Ezra is the supposed religious leader, while Johanan (mentioned in Nehemiah 12:22) is the wicked man who does not follow the divine Jewish law.⁵³

Van der Ploeg (1974:438) denies any claims that verses 19-22 should be determinative for the *genre* of Psalm 139. He argues that even though verses 19-22 does not have a parallel in Psalm 139, it is not without equal in the rest of the *Psalter*. There are quite a lot of psalms in which YHWH is requested to punish the wicked.⁵⁴ A common theme in the psalms is Godly righteousness. The psalmists regularly adopt this theme by insisting that the wicked and the unjust do not remain unpunished, while the pious are rewarded for their piety. Therefore, the utilisation of this theme in Psalm 139 should not come as a shock, and should certainly not be determinative for the *Sitz im Leben* of the psalm.⁵⁵ From this point of view, Van der Ploeg defines the *genre* of Psalm 139 as that of a song of wisdom. This argument is made from the foundation that Psalm 139 displays a multitude of similarities with the content of the book of Job. Similar to the book of Job, Psalm 139 is written in the first-person form, resulting in the deeply personal character of the psalm.

Moreover, in wisdom literature, the all-knowing wisdom of God is emphasised against the limited knowledge of humankind.⁵⁶ In Psalm 139 similar emphasis is placed on how God mysteriously knows the profound mysteries of the human heart and how the limited knowledge of the human being is entirely dependent on God’s all-knowing and perfect knowledge. The fact that the psalmist can, simultaneously, acknowledge YHWH’s superiority and subject to that authority, proves the psalmist to be wise. Van der Ploeg rejects any claims that there is a charge of idol worship brought against the

⁵³ Goulder, 2008:247.

⁵⁴ Psalms insisting on punishment of the wicked by YHWH, according to Van der Ploeg (1974:437), includes: Pss. 40:14-16; 89:51-52; 104:35; 108:13; 112:10; 127:5; 132:18; 137:7-9; 138:7; 141:10; 143:9,12; 145:20; 150:7-9.

⁵⁵ Van der Ploeg, 1974:437.

⁵⁶ Van der Ploeg, 1974:438.

psalmist, as well as the fact that the psalmist is protesting his/her innocence.⁵⁷ It is however asserted that Psalm 139 leaves the scholar with much to be desired about the circumstances which gave rise to the composition of the text.

Another scholar in favour of the notion that Psalm 139 was written by the author of the Job-drama, is Buttenwieser (1938:536). He asserts that the psalmist's realisation of God's continuous presence and the psalmist's inability to escape that presence, encompasses the theme of Psalm 139. This theme is unlike any other psalm in the *Psalter*,⁵⁸ for nowhere else in the *Psalter* the omnipresence of YHWH describes with such tenacity.⁵⁹ Buttenwieser elucidates the similarity between Psalm 139 and the Job-drama by pointing towards the contemplation of Job in Job 4:12-16 in which clandestine truths about YHWH's being is revealed to Job. Psalm 139 takes on a similar tone divulging incomprehensible truths about YHWH.⁶⁰ This similarity between the Job-drama and Psalm 139 is deemed conclusive proof that both texts were written by the same author. Consequently, Psalm 139 can be classified as a wisdom psalm.

⁵⁷ Van der Ploeg, 1974:438.

⁵⁸ Buttenwieser (1938:536) does not deny that the theme of YHWH's omnipresence is addressed in other psalms, i.e. Pss. 8, 51 and 73, however, it is never done to the extent to which the theme is discussed in Ps. 139. In Ps. 139 the theme of the omnipresence of YHWH is touched upon with great depth and richness.

⁵⁹ Five merisms are explicitly deployed in Ps. 139 with reference to physical space: "my going out" / "my lying down" (v. 3); "behind" / "before" (v. 5); "up to the heavens" / "in the depths" (v. 8); "wings of the dawn" / "far side of the sea" (v. 9); "darkness" / "light" (v. 10). The first merism refers to the movement of the psalmist in relation to the temple. "My lying down" indicates the space where the psalmist is physically at home and close to the temple, while "my going out" points towards the psalmist's journey, and as a result a moving away from the temple. "Behind" and "before" refer to the spaces around the psalmist. "Up to the heavens" and "in the depths" respectively refers to the spaces located above the heavenly dome and below the earth disk, while "wings of the dawn" and "far side of the sea" refers to the east and the west, i.e. the ends of the earth. The terms found in vv. 11 and 12 "darkness" and "night" versus "light" and "day", although appearing to be temporal terms, also refers to certain spaces. "Darkness" and "night" respectively refer to the place where the sun sets (i.e. the west) as well as the space underneath the earth disk, which, according to Ancient Near Eastern logic, is obscured by darkness. "Light" and "day" then refers to the place where the sun rises (i.e. the east) as well as the space above the sky dome, where the sun illuminates the earth. Exegetes understand the psalmist's spatial references as spaces where the physical presence of YHWH is present. That is, YHWH is present where the temple is situated, but also where the temple is not. YHWH is present in all the spaces around the psalmist whether the psalmist is near the temple or not. The presence of YHWH stretches to the outskirts of the universe. On the basis of this understanding of the psalmist's use of spatial terms, most exegetes argue that Ps. 139 endorses a theme of divine omnipresence unlike any other psalm in the *Psalter* (Briggs & Briggs, 1969:491; Buttenwieser, 1938:536; Clifford, 2003:281; Eaton, 1967:303; Hossfeld & Zenger, 2011:546).

⁶⁰ Buttenwieser, 1938:536.

Following in Buttenwieser's footsteps, Wagner (1978:373) maintains that the book of Job and Psalm 139 at the very least originated in the same post-exilic wisdom circles as a critique against apostasy.⁶¹

Kynes (2012:101-104) takes it a step further and reveals many similarities between Psalm 139 and the book of Job by drawing a comparison between the language usage, thought patterns and thematic resemblances.⁶² This comparison is done to prove that Psalm 139 complies with the substantive and formal criteria of wisdom literature. These criteria include:

- a negative attitude toward the wicked and the frivolous:
verse 19: וְאַנְשֵׁי דָמַיִם סָרוּ מִנִּי (... Away from me, you who are bloodthirsty!)
- a disassociation of the psalmist from the wicked:
verse 22: תְּכַלִּית שְׂנֵאָה שְׂנֵאָתִים (I have nothing but hatred for them...)
- the use of a rhetorical question:
verse 7a: מֵאַיִן אֶלֶּה אֶתְּךָ מֵאַיִן אֶלֶּה (Where can I go from your Spirit?)
verse 7b: וְאַיִן אֶלֶּה מִפְּנֵיךָ אֶבְרָחָה (Where can I flee from your presence?)

In concurrence with the notion of Psalm 139 as wisdom literature, Terrien (1993:68) states that although it cannot factually be confirmed that Psalm 139 was written by the author of the Job-drama, there is no doubt that Psalm 139 deeply reflects an intellectual and spiritual intimacy that places the psalmist within certain wisdom

⁶¹ Perdue (2007:97) explains that the traditional sages contributed to the formation of two prominent theological conventions in post-exilic times: the first theological convention was to re-establish obedience to the Torah, and the second was to institute a universal faith. Both these theological conventions originated as a result of the sages' attempts to capture a new understanding of God within Judaism. During the post-exilic period, wisdom was thus renowned for its preference for the Torah as well as a universalistic concept of God, such as is seen in Ps. 139.

⁶² The most evident of the similarities can be found in the comparison between Job 10:8-12 and Psalm 139:13-16. Both texts praise YHWH's creative genius by describing the creation of the human being inside of the mother's womb, which is hidden from the human eye.

circles.⁶³ The mere fact that wisdom motives can so distinctly be discerned in Psalm 139, urges the reader to at least take the wisdom dimension of the psalm seriously when considering a possible *genre* for the psalm.⁶⁴

The foregoing study laid bare the wide variety of conflicting views among scholars concerning the *genre* and *Sitz im Leben* of Psalm 139. The Gunkel-inspired form-critical approach to the text of Psalm 139 has thus far yielded unsatisfying results. From a form-critical point of view the meaning of the psalm also eludes the reader, for the *genre* of the psalm, i.e. the groundwork to the comprehension of the psalm, has not yet been successfully laid. To this Mays (1999:427) adds that Psalm 139 is a spiritual triumph that defies the limitations and challenges the boundaries of the usual *genre*-types. Gerstenberger (2001:405) counters this observation by suggesting that it is not necessary to subject the text of Psalm 139 to only one single *genre*. Research to date compels one to intentionally acknowledge that Psalm 139 hovers between different *genre*-types (Rodd, 1964:113). It is more than possible for a psalm to consist of more than one traditional *genre*. Hossfeld & Zenger (2011:537) creatively add their voices to the dialogue by reminding us that any approach to the text of Psalm 139 should always bring into question the redactional composition of the psalm.

What becomes undeniably clear, is that verses 19-22 are the culprits that pose a stumbling block in the conclusion of the psalm's *genre*. When dealing with verses 1-18 independently the psalm undoubtedly takes on the form of a hymn. It is the harsh

⁶³ Human (2009:64) rightly states that to classify psalms as pure wisdom psalms does not do justice to other form-critical elements present in the psalms.

⁶⁴ According to Burger (1987:28) the wisdom movement had a significant influence on the origin of Pss. 1, 32, 34, 37, 112, 127 and 128. These psalms can be classified as wisdom psalms in their entirety. The wisdom movement, however, is not limited to these psalms. Wisdom motives and wisdom topics can be detected in psalms classified under any one of the traditional *genres*. The use of wisdom motives and topics in the psalms should be recognised as a mode of expression utilised by the psalmist (Whybray, 1996:17). However, the possibility still exists that wisdom motifs are later editorial additions to the psalms. Nevertheless, certain psalms, of which Ps. 139 undeniably is one, contains definite wisdom characteristics that should not merely be dismissed. Crenshaw (2010:187) strongly disagrees with this notion and postulates that the *Psalter* is the product of lay people, or rather non-wise men/woman. Consequently, the psalms will have a definite relationship with a wide variety of literary forms, of which wisdom literature is one. Accordingly, the classification "wisdom psalm" is not justified. Kuntz (2003:152), on the other hand, believes that a category of "wisdom psalms" can definitely be distinguished in the *Psalter* according to characteristics that correspond to the books of Job, Ecclesiastes and Proverbs. He argues for a separate and unique *genre* under which the likes of Psalm 139 can be classified and further explored.

tone of verses 19-22 that throws the harmonious hymnal qualities of the preceding verses out of balance. Another obstacle to the interpretation of Psalm 139 is the fact that there are not enough indicators in the text to point towards a concrete historical situation.

One positive aspect that stems from scholars' disagreement on the psalm's type is that it reveals the incalculable complexities of the psalm. It is safe to say that Brueggemann & Bellinger (2014:581) correctly summed it up when they said that the degree of difficulty of Psalm 139 is manifested in the attempts from scholars to define the psalm's type.

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

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

Psalm 139 has a multitude of redactional contexts and/or relationships to be considered. Psalm 139 is firmly embedded within the fifth book of the *Psalter* (Pss. 107-150) as well as the final davidic *Psalter* (Pss. 138-145). Psalm 138 also stands in direct relation to its preceding psalm (Ps. 138) as well as its following psalm (Ps. 140). A genuine understanding of Psalm 139 requires an investigation into all these important relationships of which Psalm 139 forms a critical part of. The following study, however, will only review existing literature on the first grouping (Ps. 139 as part of the

fifth book of the *Psalter*), due to a lack of research into the other redactional contexts or relationships of which Psalm 139 forms part of.

Psalm 139 is situated in Book V of the *Psalter*, which consists of a total of forty-four psalms. An attitude of dependence on YHWH is a recurring notion that intertwines the psalms in this collection (Howard 1993:63).⁶⁵ David becomes the representative for this stature of reliance on YHWH, specifically in the psalms that are attributed to him, i.e. Psalms 108-110 and 138-145. This posture of dependence colouring the fifth book of the *Psalter*, gives rise to the recurring theme of the book, namely, that YHWH alone is King. According to Cheyne (1889:278), a systematic development is noticeable in the *Psalter* from what appears to be a narrowly focused cult-centric outlook (in Book I) to a more intimate and personal tone (in Book V). The predominantly nationalistic tone in Book I-III of the *Psalter* progressively makes way for a deeply personal observation of what seems to be a personal familiarity with YHWH in Book V. Adding to this observation, Snearly (2016:1) notes that the specific arrangement of Book V of the *Psalter* reflects a renewed hope in the davidic promises found in the preceding Books.⁶⁶ As stated by Goulder (1998:13-14) Book V can be subdivided into three larger collections, namely: Psalms 107-119; 120-134 and 135-150.⁶⁷ The first grouping (Pss. 107-119) and the third grouping (Pss. 135-150)⁶⁸ share some similar features.⁶⁹ These parallel similarities can be illustrated as follows:

⁶⁵ An attitude of dependence on YHWH can be seen in the introductory psalm of Book V of the *Psalter*, i.e. Ps. 107:13, 19 and 28. Submission to the Torah as means of dependence on YHWH is themed throughout Ps. 119, while the Psalms of Ascent (Pss. 120-134) witness to absolute trust in YHWH (Howard, 1993:63).

⁶⁶ According to Snearly (2016:1) the davidic hope, namely a messianic expectation, is evident in Book V of the *Psalter*. Each separate group of psalms in Book V centralises around a key word that echoes the theme of the specific grouping's relation to the davidic hope, proclaimed in the foregoing psalms: Pss. 107-118 (חַסֵּד and עוֹלָם); Ps. 119 (תּוֹרָה); Pss. 120-137 (צִיּוֹן); Pss. 138-145 (מִלְדָּד).

⁶⁷ The premise that Book V can be divided into three larger groupings rests on the observation that Pss. 120-134 are all introduced with the same title שִׁיר הַמַּעֲלוֹת (a pilgrimage song), consequently grouping the foregoing and following psalms to this group, together.

⁶⁸ Goulder (1998:14) explains the parallels between the first and the third part of Book V of the *Psalter* as follows: In the first subsection of Book V of the *Psalter*, that is Pss. 107-119, Pss. 111-118 are identified in the Jewish tradition as the *Egyptian Hallel*. The reason for this is the appearance of the word "hallelujah" at the beginning of Pss. 111, 112 and 113 and at the end of Pss. 113, 115, 116 and 117. In the third subsection of Book V of the *Psalter*, that is Pss. 135-150, there is again a small group (Pss. 146-150) known as the little *Hallel*. Both these two units are introduced by alphabetical psalms (Pss. 111-112 and 145), which in turn are led by a short series of davidic Psalms (Pss. 108-110 and 138-145).

⁶⁹ Goulder, 1998:14.

Part one of Book V of the <i>Psalter</i>	Shared similarities	Part three of Book V of the <i>Psalter</i>
105-106	Historic psalms	135-136
107	Psalms for the exiles who returned from Babylon	137
108-110	Psalms of David	138-145
111, 112	Alphabetical psalms	145
113-119	Hallel Psalms	146-150

The careful observation that two similar psalm series were composed and positioned on either side of the Songs of Ascents testifies to a thoroughly planned framework. Goulder believes that an amalgamating system of thought unites both units, which can be explained as follows:⁷⁰

Unifying theme	Part one of Book V of the <i>Psalter</i>	Part three of Book V of the <i>Psalter</i>
God calls upon the patriarchs.	Psalm 105:8-23	Psalm 135:4
God saves Israel from Egypt.	Psalm 105:24-38 Psalm 106:7-12	Psalm 135:8-9 Psalm 136:13-33
God gives Israel their land.	Psalm 105:43-44 Psalm 106:34	Psalm 135:10-12 Psalm 136:16-22
Because of Israel's sin, they are taken captive.	Psalm 106:35-43	
God remembers the covenant with Israel and they are redeemed as God's people.	Psalm 106:44-46	Psalm 136:23-24
God brings back the people from Babylon.	Psalm 107	Psalm 137

⁷⁰ Goulder, 1998:16.

The people of God experience challenging and threatening situations.	Psalms 108-110	Psalms 138-145
The people praise their God for deliverance.	Psalms 111-118	Psalms 146-150

From this observation, the conclusion can be made that Book V of the *Psalter*, in its entirety, emphasis the reliable Kingship of YHWH as well as the unreserved importance of the people’s dependency on the Kingship of YHWH (Creach, 1996:93).

Based on the editorial history of the *Psalter*, Wilson (2005:392) states that Psalms 90-150 (i.e. Book IV and V of the *Psalter*) were appended to the preceding Books I-III of the *Psalter* as an answer to the Israelites search for hope. As a result, the purpose of Book IV and V is to redirect the hope of the people away from the earthly davidic kingdom to the Kingdom of YHWH. This is done by accentuating that God can be trusted in the present just as in the ancient Mosaic past before the davidic monarchy was established and the Jewish cult was centralised. For Wilson (1986:92) the theme of salvation closely accompanies the theme of trust in YHWH as the only monarch. For that reason, Books I-III of the *Psalter* are classified as the ‘Messianic collection’, while Books IV-V is known as the ‘theocratic collection’ (Brown, 2012:107). In the latter collection, YHWH’s kingship over the whole of creation is praised, instead of that of YHWH’s human counterpart.

Zenger (1998:89) points to two collections as the central focus of Book V of the *Psalter*: Psalms 113-118 and Psalms 120-137. These specific psalm groupings centre on the theme of the universal Kingdom of YHWH – the God who liberated Israel from Egypt and blesses His people from Zion. From the perspective of the universal Kingdom of YHWH, the psalms are a call directed to Israel together with all the nations of the world, to acknowledge and praise YHWH’s supremacy and universal kingship. From this observation, it becomes clear that the psalms in Book V all share a theocentric foundation. A clear shift in emphasis can be distinguished from the preceding books in the *Psalter*. In Book V attention is directed away from the davidic monarchy and the

vulnerability of earthly kings, while attention is drawn to the infallible, everlasting dominion of YHWH (Wallace, 2009:5).

The shift in focus that takes place in Book V of the *Psalter* from a davidic kingdom to a kingdom with divine rule compels Goulder (1998:17) to say that Book V as a whole most probably has its origins in the period following the exile. David chose Jerusalem as the religious and political capital of Israel. Therefore, Jerusalem and the temple played a pivotal role in the lives of the people (Burden, 1991:27). During the Babylonian captivity, Jerusalem together with the temple that served as a corporal symbol of YHWH's physical presence on earth was destroyed.⁷¹ The exiles were left without a king and a cult. Their exile and their return to a destroyed Jerusalem and temple naturally compelled Israel to re-imagine the Kingdom, the cult and primarily the divinity and rule of YHWH. As a result, Wilson (1993:63) believes that Book V of the *Psalter* reveals an attitude of dependence on and trust in YHWH, and not any earthly figure. What is even more notable, is that David becomes the primary advocate of this attitude of dependence on YHWH. David is regarded as the campaigner of this trust in Psalms 108-110 and 138-145.

In light of the paradigm of YHWH's universal Kingdom and David as a primary advocate for an attitude of dependence on YHWH, Psalm 139 must be examined and interpreted. As a result, Brueggemann & Bellinger (2014:582) suggests that Psalm 139, as part of the final davidic *Psalter*, should be read and understood as a product of the aftermath of the exile.⁷² Eaton (2003:459) further infers that because of the heading of Psalm 139 לְמַנְצֵחַ לְדָוִד מִזְמוֹר (For the director of music. Of David. A psalm) as well as the position of Psalm 139 in the series of Psalms 138-145, it is

⁷¹ Burden (1991:27) illustrates Jerusalem as the holy dwelling of YHWH on earth by giving an exposition of other names used to describe Jerusalem in the *Psalter*. Jerusalem is known as the sacred mountain of God (Ps. 48:2); the city of God (Pss. 46:5; 48:2); the city of the Lord Almighty (Pss. 48:9; 84:2); and the holy place of the Most High (Ps. 46:5). The emphasis on Jerusalem as the property and the residence of YHWH closely accompanies the Ancient Near Eastern understanding of religious cult centres, i.e. that every cult has its own centre where the deity of the cult is believed to reside.

⁷² Brueggemann & Bellinger (2014:582) remarks that although the tone of Ps. 138 differs greatly from that of Ps. 139, both psalms share the common theme that YHWH is present despite the destruction of the temple and that YHWH has never been bound to the temple alone, but is ever-present in all situations.

plausible that it is a king speaking.⁷³ In similar psalms, the king would be found drawing close to YHWH for fortification. However, the physical place of such encounters is always the sanctuary. The king comes to the temple or the sanctuary to draw strength from his communion with YHWH to confront his enemies. Conversely this argument and many other similarly assumed *Sitz im Leben* disregarded the theology of Book V of the *Psalter*, i.e. that there is no more temple or sanctuary to go to. Gerstenberger (2001:401) explains that the superscription in Psalm 139 is very common and occurs at least thirty-five times in the *Psalter*. The traditional bi-part heading attributed to Psalm 139 simply accredit a song to king David and should not necessarily be used to contrive a *Sitz im Leben* that disregards the location of the psalm in the *Psalter*. Delitsch (1952:343) adds that Psalm 139 is only inscribed לְדָוִד not because it proves the ancient davidic origin, but because it is composed after a davidic model.⁷⁴ Wallace (2007:84) tries to reconcile the superscription of Psalm 139 with the king that is widely known and loved throughout the Hebrew Bible by denoting that the David of Book V of the *Psalter* is not the imperial ruler and infallible king of the preceding psalms in Book I-IV of the *Psalter*. The David of Book V of the *Psalter* is a king whose power is not unlimited and whose throne and descendants are not a definite assurance. Brown (2012:107) underlines this summary by describing David in Book V of the *Psalter* as a king submitting before the Kingship of YHWH.

Book V of the *Psalter* can be distinguished from the preceding psalms by way of its distinctive theological character.⁷⁵ Zenger (1998:93-94) places further emphasis on the last davidic *Psalter* by adding that this unit is structurally designed to exalt YHWH. At the commencement of the final davidic *Psalter*, i.e. Psalm 138, the psalmist claims to love YHWH with the psalmist's whole heart, while the unit concludes in Psalm 145

⁷³ Psalm 139 shows significant similarities to Pss. 16, 17 and 63. In these psalms a king is found claiming that his enemies are also the enemies of YHWH to gain merit in his opposition to them (Eaton, 2003:459).

⁷⁴ "Little interest has been paid to these titles in recent years. The reason for this lack of interest is clear. A wide consensus has been reached among critical scholars for over a hundred years that the titles are secondary additions which can afford no reliable information toward establishing the genuine historical setting of the psalms" (Childs, 1979:520).

⁷⁵ According to Zenger (1998:81) Book V of the *Psalter* can be distinguished from the preceding four books by the vision of the universal Kingdom of YHWH that will be brought about by a theophany on Zion. In Book V of the *Psalter* the fall of the davidic kingdom is lamented, whilst the rise of the universal Kingdom of YHWH is celebrated.

with an emphasis on YHWH's loyalty towards those who love and are committed to YHWH. Thus, the smaller structural unit formed between Psalms 138 and 145 within Book V of the *Psalter* specifically points towards the intimate relationship between YHWH and the psalmist. Zenger explains that Psalms 140-144 can be understood as a composite unit that shows a movement in thought from a plea in a situation of actual eschatological distress to a situation of supernatural contentment and the praise of the universal Kingdom of YHWH.⁷⁶ In view of this line of thought, Psalm 139 can be read and understood as the introduction to the compound unit of Psalms 140-144. The concepts of חִקְרָה (exploration) and יְדָעָה (knowledge) which colours the theology of Psalm 139, indicates YHWH's perfect knowledge of humankind along with the human being's absolute dependence on YHWH. This makes Psalm 139 the ideal introduction to the content of Psalms 140-144.

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

The universality of the Kingdom of YHWH, themed in Book V of the *Psalter*, combined with the perfect knowledge of YHWH, as emphasised in Psalm 139, gives rise to the impression that Psalm 139 was composed or rather adapted to use in the aftermath of the exile. The last davidic unit in the *Psalter* (Pss. 138-145) that is specifically designed to highlight the intimate relationship between YHWH and humankind is

⁷⁶ Zenger, 1998:95-96.

replicated in the frame of mind incorporated in the composition of Psalm 139. Although Psalm 139 is inevitably coloured in the theological profile of Book V, it is clear from current research that not enough is said on the relationship of Psalm 139 with its surrounding psalms. There is still a disparity in the research of Psalm 139 regarding the relationship of Psalm 139 with its surrounding groups and consequently with what these relationships have to say about the content of Psalm 139 itself.

2.3 Synthesis

The foregoing study makes one thing inevitably clear, and that is even though Psalm 139 is endowed with the title of ‘most beautiful psalm in the *Psalter*,’ it is not exempt from scholarly dissension and great controversy.

An overview of the literature to date reveals two primary focal points in the study of Psalm 139 that has thus far enjoyed the attention of scholars. The first focus in research falls on the unity and/or division of Psalm 139. Within this faction of the research on Psalm 139, researchers attempt to make sense of the huge theological as well as textual dissension that occurs between verses 18 and 19 of the text. In the preceding study, the multiple ways in which the unity and/or division of Psalm 139 could be explained was explored. This exploration led to the conclusion that there are mainly three trends adhered to when working with the unity of Psalm 139. The first of the three trends subscribe to a clear-cut two-part division of the text. The subject and content of the psalm support a division of the psalm in between verses 18 and 19. It cannot be refuted that Psalm 139 exhibits an inconsistency in form and tone between verses 1-18 and 19-24. There is, however, not enough rhetoric to remedy the incompatible tones present in Psalm 139. Instead, scholars insisting on dividing the psalm at this section contributes to the obscurity of the text. The second trend supports a division of a plurality of stanzas that each represent a unique theme. However, each scholar attempts an own division and layout of the text which ultimately fails to explain the irreconcilable tones present in the psalm. Finally, the third trend is a scholarly insistence on treating the psalm as an undividable unity with one concrete theme. This trend that is based on the *inclusio* formed with verses 1 and 23-24, fails to recognise the conflict within the psalm itself and consequently does little to adjudicate between the positive and negative tones present in Psalm 139. None of these methods of

structural division of Psalm 139 can account for the discrepancies in the text and therefore, leaves the reader with more questions than answers.

The disagreement on the unity and/or division of Psalm 139 gives rise to the second trend amongst scholars, which is a focus on the *genre* and *Sitz im Leben* of the psalm. Scholars partaking in this line of research on Psalm 139, go to extremes to prove the placement of the psalm within a pre-determined *genre*-grouping. There is an endless list of proposed *genres* to Psalm 139 which in itself serve as proof to the fact that the form-critical approach to Psalm 139 yielded unsatisfying results. Arguments to this effect are also endless with some scholars proposing that Psalm 139 belongs to more than one *genre*-grouping, while others propose a new and unique *genre* classification under which, according to them, Psalm 139 should be classified, i.e. wisdom psalms. Though it is undeniable that there is a great variety of *genre* categories hinted to in the multitude of subsections, none conclusively dominates the rest. Primarily the *genre* classification of the psalm eludes scholars since a well-defined *Sitz im Leben* remains unattainable from the little historical pointers in the text. Scholars not only remain uncertain about what circumstances gave rise to the composition of Psalm 139 but are also hesitant about what circumstances the psalm would be deployed in. Therefore, a definite *genre* classification of Psalm 139 seems to evade scholars.

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

This chapter serves only as a starting point for this study, functioning as a basis on which to further build an understanding of Psalm 139. The literature overview given in this chapter will act as a barometer throughout this study, by which all further data will be measured. With much-needed caution, we will proceed in this study to further explore the relationships of which Psalm 139 forms part of, to more carefully discern how the seemingly out of place plea of verses 19-22 can enter into dialogue with the realisation of divine presence in verses 1-18 and 23-24.

CHAPTER 3

LITERARY ANALYSIS

3.1 Introduction

In chapter 3 focus falls on a literary analysis of Psalm 139. The objective of this chapter is to perform exegesis on Psalm 139, exploring the textual features and elements of the text as well as surveying the interrelationships between these characteristics – syntax, poetic features, structure, dating, *genre*, etc.⁷⁷ This literary analysis of Psalm 139 consist of a literary-exegetical study or rather a synchronic study of the text. This chapter aims to establish a holistic understanding of the text at hand. A holistic understanding of the textual nature of Psalm 139 is accomplished by determining which individual building blocks the text consists of, and how these units fit together. A literary-exegetical study of Psalm 139 aids the interpreter in establishing the meaning that the poet wanted to convey to the original readers and ultimately how the psalm was designed to communicate the intended meaning of the text to its audience.

3.2 Text and translation

The following is a free translation of the Hebrew text of Psalm 139 that will be used as a reference for the rest of this dissertation:

Stanza	Strophe	Hebrew text: Psalm 139	Verse	Free translation: Psalm 139
HEADING		לְמַנְצֵחַ לְדָוִד מְזֻמָּר	1a	For the supervisor; of David a psalm. ⁷⁸

⁷⁷ Hossfeld & Zenger (2011:538) argue that the analysis of the poetic structure and the characteristics of a psalm plays an important role in the reconstruction of the unique and individual thinking process present in the particular psalm. This kind of analysis of a text evaluates the characteristics of said text in order to make meaningful suggestions about the content and the meaning thereof.

⁷⁸ The heading is uniquely attributed to David. This unique threefold Hebrew composition of the heading 'For the supervisor, to David, a psalm' only occurs in two other places in the *Psalter*, namely in Pss. 40:1 and 109:1 (Hossfeld & Zenger, 2011:540).

79	A	יְהוָה חִקְרָתַנִּי וַתֵּדַע:	b	YHWH, you search me and you know me. ⁸⁰
		אַתָּה יָדַעְתָּ שְׁבַתִּי וְקוּמִי	2a	You know my sit down and my rise up;
		בְּנִתְּהָ לְרַעִי ⁸¹ מֵרְחוֹק:	b	you discern my intention from afar.
		אַרְתִּי וְרַבְעִי זָרִית	3a	My wandering and my lying down you measure off;
		וְכָל־דַּרְכֵי הַסִּפְּנֹתָהּ:	b	and all my ways you are familiar with.
		כִּי אֵין מִלָּה בְּלִשׁוֹנִי	4a	For nought a word is in my tongue,
		הֵן יְהוָה יָדַעְתָּ כֻּלָּהּ:	b	behold! YHWH you know all of her.
	B	אַחֹר וּקְדָם ⁸² צִרְתַּנִּי	5a	Behind and in front you shut me in;
		וַתָּשֶׁת עָלַי כַּפְּכָהּ:	b	and you have laid on me your hand.
		(פְּלִיאָה) ⁸³ [פְּלִיאָה] דַּעַת ⁸⁴ מִמֶּנִּי	6a	Wonderful is this knowledge for me;

⁷⁹ In stanza I God is the subject of the verbs.

⁸⁰ The verbs חִקַּר (to search) and יָדַע (to know) are repeated in exactly the same order in v. 23.

⁸¹ Some copies of the Hebrew Codex manuscripts as well as some versions of the LXX and the Syrian codices replace the Resj (ר) in לְרַעִי of which the basis is רַע (thought/intention) with a Dalet (ד) לְדַעִי of which the basis is דַּע (knowledge). If the Resj (ר) is substituted with the Dalet (ד) then the phrase will not be translated with 'you discern my intentions/thoughts from afar', but rather 'you discern my knowledge from afar'. Reciprocally the different readings of the text imply the same, namely that YHWH knows the depths of humankind - that which is not necessarily known by others cannot be hidden from YHWH.

⁸² The LXX connects the phrase אַחֹר וּקְדָם (behind and in front) with the foregoing verse. The addition to verse 4b will merely be an extension of that which is ultimately known by and cannot be hidden from YHWH, namely the 'behind' (the past) and the 'in front' (the future) of humankind.

⁸³ The Ketiv and Qere variants of פְּלִיאָה (wonderful) differ in vs. 6. The majority of Hebrew Codex manuscripts use the Qere variant פְּלִיאָה.

⁸⁴ The LXX adds the proprietary pronoun adjective to the word דַּעַת (knowledge) to indicate that it is the knowledge belonging to YHWH that is inaccessible to humankind.

		נְשֹׁבָה לֹא-אוּכַל לָהּ:	b	unattainable, I am not able to her.
11 ⁸⁵	C	אֵנָה אֵלַי מֵרוּחְךָ	7a	Where do I go from your spirit;
		וְאֵנָה מִפְּנֵיךָ אֶבְרַח:	b	and where from your face I fled?
		אִם-אֶסַק שָׁמַיִם שָׁם אַתָּה	8a	If I climbed up the heavens there you are;
		וְאֶצִּיעָה שְׂאוֹל הַנֶּדֶךְ:	b	and I spread out in Sheol, behold! you are there!
		אֲשָׂא כְּנַפְי־שַׁחַר ⁸⁶	9a	I rise up on wings of the dawn;
		אֲשַׁכְּנָה ⁸⁷ בְּאַחֲרֵית יָם:	b	I dwelled in the ends of the sea
		גַּם-שָׁם יְדָךְ תִּנְחַנֵּי ⁸⁸	10a	also there your hand she guides me;
	וְתִאָּחַזְנִי יְמִינֶךָ:	b	and she grasps me your right hand.	
	D	וְאָמַר ⁸⁹ אֶךְ-תִּשְׂךָ יְשׁוּפְנִי ⁹⁰	11a	And I said, surely darkness cover me.

⁸⁵ In stanza II the psalmist is the subject of the verbs.

⁸⁶ In the LXX the phrase reads τὰς πτέρυγὰς μου κατ' ὄρθρον (my wings of the dawn) while the Hebrew text only read כְּנַפְי־שַׁחַר (wings of the dawn).

⁸⁷ A few Hebrew Codex manuscripts, including the LXX and Sirian manuscripts, adds a Waw consecutive ו (and) in front of אֲשַׁכְּנָה. However, this addition does not make a significant difference in the understanding of the text.

⁸⁸ An alternative to the word תִּנְחַנֵּי (she guides me) is proposed. The proposed alternative is תִּקְחֵנִי that stems from יָקַח (shameless), would alter the translation as follows: "also there your hand was shameless, your right hand grabbed me." Prinsloo (1994:121) suggests that the alternative can be translated with 'you grab me.' because it fits better within the context of the verse. This particular amendment helps to understand the extent of YHWH's omnipresence. YHWH's omnipresence is unashamed as it reaches as far as the ends of creation.

⁸⁹ It is suggested that the Waw consecutive added to the verb אָמַר (to say), must be changed to a Waw copulative. This implies that the mode of the verb must be changed from an imperfect verb to a perfect verb. The Masoretic text, however, is clear in meaning without this adaptation.

⁹⁰ Symmachus' Greek translation of the Old Testament reads two alternative root forms instead of יְשׁוּפְנִי (he covered me). The first is the word שָׁכַךְ (to hold on) which would consequently alter the

		וְלַיְלָה אֹרֶךְ בְּעֵדְנִי:	b	and the night become the light of day around me.
		גַּם־חֹשֶׁךְ לֹא־יִחְשֶׁךְ מִמֶּנִּי	12a	Also the darkness does not become dark for you;
		וְלַיְלָה כִּיּוֹם יֵאִיר	b	and the night shines like the day,
		כְּחֹשֶׁכָה כְּאוֹרָה:	c	the darkness shines like the light.
III	E	כִּי־אַתָּה קָנִיתָ כְּלִי־תִי	13a	Because you create my kidneys;
		תְּסַכְּנִי בְּבֶטֶן ⁹¹ אִמִּי:	b	you weaved me in the womb of my mother.
		אֲוֹדְךָ עַל כִּי נֹרְאוֹת נִפְלְיֹתִי ⁹²	14a	I praise you because fearfully I am distinct;
		נִפְלְאִים מַעֲשֶׂיךָ	b	wonderfully are your works
		וְנַפְשִׁי יִדְעֵת מְאֹד:	c	and my soul knowing this abundance.
	F	לֹא־נִכְחַד עֲצָמָי מִמֶּנִּי	15a	Not it was hidden my bones from you

translation to “he holds on to me” and the second possibility is the word סָכַךְ (to isolate) which would alter the translation to “he isolates me.” Needless to say, all three of these translations would imply that darkness has to hide the psalmist. Therefore, the Masoretic text is clear without this adaptation.

⁹¹ The LXX expands on the Masoretic text by adding the genetic preposition, ἐκ ‘from/out of’ to the text. The phrase ἐκ γαστρὸς (from the womb) indicates that YHWH had already taken control of the psalmist whilst the psalmist was still unborn (Hossfeld & Zenger, 2011:536).

⁹² The original Greek text interprets the כִּי־phrase with the divine predicate (Hossfeld & Zenger, 2011:536). The translation will then be changed to ‘I praise you because fearfully you are distinct’ instead of the current translation ‘I praise you because fearfully I am distinct’. This, however, will complicate the translation of the text that follows this given sentence. Consequently, the Masoretic text is preferred.

	אֲשֶׁר-עָשִׂיתִי ⁹⁴ בַּסֵּתֶר	b	when I was made in the hiding place,
	בְּתַחְתֵּי־רַקְמָתִי ⁹⁵ אֶרֶץ:	c	I was woven in the lowest of the earth.
	גְּלִמִּי ⁹⁶ רָאוּ עֵינֶיךָ	16a	My formless mass your eyes did see;
	וְעַל-סִפְרֶךָ כָּל־יְכָתְבוּ	b	and in your book all of them were written,
	יָמִים ⁹⁹ יִצְרוּ	c	the days were formed
	(וְלֹא) [וְלוֹ ¹⁰⁰] אֶחָד בְּהֵם ¹⁰¹ :	d	and not to him one was there.

⁹³ It is suggested that the preposition כ (like) is inadvertently omitted from the word אֲשֶׁר (who, which, that, when) and that the word should actually read כְּאֲשֶׁר (like when). This omission, however, does not change the meaning of the phrase.

⁹⁴ The LXX changes the subject of the word עָשִׂיתִי (I was made) which is in the first person passive-form (Pual perf. 1 s.) to the second person active-form עָשִׂיתָ (Qal perf. 2 m. s.). This changes the translation from 'I was made' to 'you (YHWH) makes.' This translation implies that YHWH is the one observing the creative work, not humankind, and thus confirms the theme of the psalm, namely that YHWH is everywhere and always at work.

⁹⁵ In the LXX the Masoretic text רַקְמָתִי (I was woven) is translated with the Greek και η ύπόστασις (and the substance). This translation does not read the Masoretic text as a verb (Pual perf. 1 s.), but rather as a noun רַקְמָה (pieces of material) with the addition of the pronominal suffix 1 s. 'me' which can be translated with 'the pieces of my material'.

⁹⁶ This text-critical note suggests that the phrase גְּלִמִּי | רָאוּ עֵינֶיךָ (my formless mass your eyes did see) consists of a *hapax legomenon* that needs to be eradicated and transposed to יָמִי יִצְרוּ (you form my days).

⁹⁷ There is a suggestion that the Mem (מ) en Lamed (ל) of the *hapax legomenon* גְּלִמִּי (my formless mass) or rather (my embryo) should be reversed in order to form the root of the word גָּמַל (completed / weaned).

⁹⁸ Another suggestion is made that the word כָּל־יְכָתְבוּ (all of them) should be adjusted to כָּל-יּוֹם (all days). Then the phrase 'and in your book all of them were written' would change to 'all the days ... were written in your book.' The NIV-translation uses this customised translation.

⁹⁹ Another suggestion is made that the word יָמִים (days) should be replaced with the phrase כָּל-יְמֵי (all my days).

¹⁰⁰ A few Masoretic manuscripts prefer the Qere variant וְלֹא (and not) above the Ketiv variant וְלֹא.

¹⁰¹ Some Masoretic manuscripts do not make use of the preposition ב (in), but instead replace this with the preposition מִן (from, out of, by).

	G	וְלִי מִה־יִקְרָו רַעִיף אֵל	17a	And for me, how precious are your thoughts?
		מִה עֲצֻמוֹ רֵאשִׁיָּהֶם: ¹⁰²	b	How numerous the totalities of them?
		אֶסְפֵּרָם מִתּוֹל יִרְבּוֹן	18a	I counted them they were numerous, more than sand;
		הִקִּיצְתִּי ¹⁰³ וְעוֹדִי עִמּוֹךְ:	b	I awake and still I am with you.
IV	H	אִם־תִּקְטַל אֱלֹהִים רָשָׁע	19a	God, if you killed the wicked;
		וְאֲנָשִׁי דָמִים סוֹרוּ ¹⁰⁴ מִנִּי: ¹⁰⁵	b	and men of blood turn away from me!
		אֲשֶׁר יֹאמְרוּ ¹⁰⁶ לְמִזְמָה	20a	They who speak of an evil plan against you;
		נִשְׂאוּ ¹⁰⁷ לְשׂוֹא עֲרִיף: ¹⁰⁸	b	they raised to misuse your name, your adversaries.

¹⁰² There are some Masoretic manuscripts that link the Waw copulative וְ (and) to the interrogative pronoun מִה (how?). This does not change the meaning of the text.

¹⁰³ It is suggested that the word הִקִּיצְתִּי (I awake) should most probably be the word הִקְצוֹתִי of which the root is קִצַּץ (to end). The alternative word choice has a major impact on the translation and meaning of the text. The verse will then be translated as follows: 'Did I count them they were much more than sand; if I am ended, I am still with you.' There are a few Masoretic manuscripts that prefer this translation.

¹⁰⁴ A few Hebrew manuscripts use the perfect-form of סָרוּ instead of the imperative-form סוֹרוּ. The translation is simply altered from 'I turn away' to a demand 'turn away!'

¹⁰⁵ Some Hebrew manuscripts use the verb מוֹמְנִי instead of מִנִּי. The translation of the phrase 'from me.' however, stays unchanged.

¹⁰⁶ The Quinta Greek translation reads, instead of יֹאמְרוּ (Qal impf. 3 m. pl. אָמַר 'to say' + Pns 2 m. s. 'you' ; 'they said to you') the word יִמְרוּ (Hifil impf. 3 m. s. אָמַר 'to say' ; 'he told').

¹⁰⁷ An alternate possibility for reading the word נִשְׂאוּ (Qal perf. 3 o. pl. נָשָׂא 'to raise'; 'they raised') is וּנְשָׂאוּ (Waw cons וְ 'en' + Pual impf. 3 m. pl. נָשָׂא 'to raise'; 'he exalted them'). This translation is used in the majority of cases.

¹⁰⁸ Hossfeld & Zenger (2011:536) explains that the two legs of v. 20 must be understood as parallels. That is the reason the word עֲרִיף is translated with 'your haters'. Many Hebrew manuscripts make use of this phrase. However, it is also suggested that the word עֲלִיף can be used in this instance. It consists

	I	הָלוֹא־מִשְׂנֵאִיךָ יְהוָה ¹⁰⁹ אֲשָׁנָא	21a	If not YHWH your haters, I hated;
		וּבְתִקּוּמֵיךָ ¹¹⁰ אֶתְקוּטָט:	b	and those who rise up against you, I loathe?
		תְּכַלִּית שְׂנְאָה שְׂנְאָתִים	22a	With extremity of hatred, I hate them
		לְאוֹיְבִים הָיוּ לִי:	b	for they are enemies to me.
V	J	חַקְרֵנִי אֵל וְדַע לִבִּי	23a	God, you must search me and you must know my heart!
		בְּחַנְנֵי וְדַע שְׂרַעְפֵּי:	b	You must examine me and you must know my disquieting thoughts!
		וּרְאֵה אִם־דַּרְךְ־עֵצָב בִּי	24a	And you must see if the way of idol is in me,
		וְנַחֲנֵי בְּדַרְךְ עוֹלָם:	b	and you must lead me in the way everlasting.

3.3 Demarcation of the text

Based on formal criteria, Psalm 139 can be demarcated as an individual pericope. Psalm 139 has its own heading and/or introductory formula לְמִנְצַח לְדָוִד מִזְמוֹר (For the supervisor; to David a psalm). This introductory formula identifies the psalm from the outset as one of the psalms belonging to the davidic collection in Book V of the

of the preposition על (on / against) together with the pronominal suffix 2 m. s. 'you' which can be translated as 'against you'

¹⁰⁹ The Proper name יְהוָה (JHWH) is absent in some Hebrew manuscripts.

¹¹⁰ A few Hebrew manuscripts translate the word וּבְתִקּוּמֵיךָ as the const. m. pl. of the root תִּקּוּם (height). However, there are some Masoretic manuscripts that understand this word as a Hitpa'el participle active of the Hebrew word קוּם (to stand up). Consequently, it translates as 'those who are in rebellion against you.'

Psalter.¹¹¹ Although the preceding psalm, Psalm 138, and the following psalm, Psalm 140, is also classified as part of the davidic collection, Psalm 139 is distinguished from them based on the content of the psalm. Furthermore, the second part of the introductory formula in verse 1: **יְהוָה חִקְרָתָנִי וַתֵּדָעַי** (YHWH, you search me and you know me) introduces the content of the psalm by indicating in advance the theme of the rest of the content, namely that there is nothing that humankind can hide from the all-seeing, ever-present eyes of YHWH. Mutually, the phrase in verse 23: **וְדַע שְׂרַעַפִּי**: **וְדַע שְׂרַעַפִּי** (And you must see if the way of the idol is in me, and you must lead me in the way everlasting) is employed as a closing formula by which the thought unit introduced in verse 1 is closed by means of an *inclusio*. In Psalm 139 three role-players can be identified: YHWH, the psalmist and the wicked (or the enemies of the YHWH, who by default becomes the enemies of the psalmist). The third mentioned role-player does not come into play during the first eighteen verses of the psalm and is only introduced in verse 19. YHWH and the psalmist are alternately used as the subject in the various stanzas of Psalm 139. The continuous presence of poetic techniques such as parallelisms, *chiasms*, *merisms* and *inclusios* also bind the content of the psalm to a close unity.

Based on substantive criteria, Psalm 139 displays as an independent unit. The course of events in Psalm 139 is well rounded in terms of how the acts of the psalm follow each other. In verses 1-2 the psalmist commences by asserting that YHWH knows humankind completely. Additionally, the psalmist then continues to emphasise the omnipresence of YHWH by making use of certain spatial terms, such as **אַחֲרָי** (behind) and **קִדְמָי** (in front) of **שָׁמַיִם** (heavens) and **שְׂאוֹל** (Sheol/underworld). The use of these terms serves to emphasise the presence of YHWH as ubiquitous. With verses 23-24 Psalm 139 finally concludes with a closing prayer asking YHWH to investigate the heart of the psalmist and also to direct the psalmist in an everlasting way. The psalmist permits YHWH to be within the psalmist ('search me' / 'examine me') and also to be outside/around the psalmist ('lead me'). The final verses of Psalm 139 reveal a call on

¹¹¹ Three collections can be distinguished in Book V of the *Psalter*: the songs of ascent (Pss. 120-134); the davidic collection (Pss. 138-145) and the Hallel psalms (Pss. 135-136; 146-150).

the omnipresence of YHWH, as is observed in the introduction to the psalm, and admired throughout the psalm.

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

3.4 Textual criticism

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

The text-critical amendment 10^a suggests an alternative to the word תַּנְחֵנִי (she guides me). The proposed alternative is תִּקְחֵנִי whose root-form is יָקַח (be unashamed). The translation will then be altered as follows: ‘also there you hand was unashamed.’ This particular alteration contributes to understanding the extent of YHWH’s omnipresence. YHWH’s ubiquity is unashamed and can reach as far as the ends of the earth. Deissler (1979:538) suggests that the second translation of the word is far more fitting to the context of the text, for it illustrates the radicality with which YHWH pursues the psalmist. YHWH so eagerly tracks the psalmist that YHWH’s action can almost be described as a brazen ‘gripping’ or ‘seizing’ of the psalmist. Prinsloo (1994:121), however, believes that this translation is based on an incorrect interpretation of the text. According to Prinsloo the word נָחַה (to guide) reveals YHWH’s intimate knowledge of and involvement in the psalmist’s life. Vos (2005:197) adds that the phrase יָדְךָ תַּנְחֵנִי (your hand guide me) has a positive connotation in the Old Testament and refers to divine providence.

Similarly, it is suggested in the textual amendment 11^a that the translation of Symmachus of the word יְשׁוּבֵנִי (cover me) has two other possible root-forms. The first is שָׁכַךְ (to hold) and the second possibility is סָכַךְ (to isolate). Within the context of Psalm 139, all three of these translations equally imply that the darkness must hide

the psalmist from the eyes of YHWH. The Masoretic text is thus clear without this adaptation.

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

3.5 Morphological analysis ¹¹²

The following prominent features are present in Psalm 139:

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

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

i. YHWH

Three times the Lord is referred to as “*YHWH*” in verses 1, 4, 21; twice the Lord is called “*El*” in verses 14 and 23; and once the Lord is referred to as “*Elohim*” in verse 19.

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

¹¹² For a complete morphological analysis of Psalm 139 see Addendum A.

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

ii. The psalmist

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

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

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

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

The reference to the wicked and/or enemies of YHWH only occur in stanza IV (vv. 19-22) of Psalm 139. On two different occasions, the 3rd person male plural is employed to refer to the adversaries of YHWH and the psalmist as “they”. This implies that the writer of the psalm does not refer to a single person as the enemy of YHWH and the psalmist, but rather to a group of wicked and godless people. Also, the participle active male plural is used in two different instances to classify the adversaries according to their nature and attitude towards YHWH and the psalmist. In verse 21 they are called ‘haters’ while they are cut out as ‘enemies’ in verse 22.

iv. Thematic repetition of words

A striking feature of Psalm 139 is the constant alternating between two respective subjects, i.e. YHWH and the psalmist. This continuous interchanging between these

two subjects exemplifies what scholars refer to as the “I-you” relationship (Clifford, 2003:279; Hossfeld & Zenger, 2011:238). In Psalm 139 the “I” refers to the psalmist while the “you” refers to YHWH. The different subjects alternately dominate different sections in the psalm. Verses 1-6 as well as verses 13-18 is dominated by the “you”, i.e. YHWH, while verses 7-12 as well as verses 19-24 there are mostly referred to the “I”, i.e. the psalmist.

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

Several verbs are linked to the psalmist’s movement: שָׁבַתִּי (my sit down); וָקוּמִי (and my rise up); אָרַחֲתִי (my wandering); וָרַבְעִי (and my lying down); דַּרְכֵי (my ways) ; אֵלֶיךָ (I go); אֶבְרַחֶה (I fled); אֶסָּק (I climbed up); וָאֲצִיעֶה (and I spread out); אָשָׂא (I rose up); אֲשַׁכְּנֶה (I dwelled); עָשִׂיתִי (I was made); רָקַמְתִּי (I was woven). This repetition contrasts and emphasises the psalmist’s limitedness against YHWH’s omniscience and omnipresence.

3.6 Syntactical analysis

For the sake of truthfulness to the text, in this study, preference is given to the Masoretic syntactical analysis.¹¹³ This will be put into effect to determine the seams of

¹¹³ The system of Masoretic accentuation aids in the demarcation of phrases in a way that stays true to the text at hand, without imposing modern syntactical systems on an ancient text. In the BHS accents

the text, as it was originally divided by the Masoretes in verses and cola.¹¹⁴ This syntactical study will be carried out by identifying and using Masoretic markers. The distribution of verses and cola serves as an aid to determine the structure of the psalm and to identify the poetic techniques in the psalm. A line is formed after every primary disjunctive. In Psalm 139 the primary dividing disjunctives are: the *Sillûq*, the *‘Atnāḥ* and the *‘Ôlé weyôred*.

A Masoretic syntactical analysis of Psalm 139:1-24

Dividing disjunctives ¹¹⁵		Cola	Line	Vs.	Type	Translation
Dem. ¹¹⁶	Acc. ¹¹⁷					
Atn(1)	Tip	לְמַנְצֵחַ לְדָוִד מְזֻמָּר	1a	1	Bi	For the supervisor; of David. A psalm.
Sil(0)	RebM	יְהוָה חִקְרָתָנִי וַתְּדַע:	b			YHWH, you search me and you know me.
Atn(1)	Tip	אַתָּה יָדַעְתָּ שְׁבִתִּי וְקוּמִי	2a	2	Bi	You know my sit down and my rise up
Sil(0)	RebM	בְּנִתָּה לְרַעִי מֵרְחוֹק:	b			you discern my intention from afar.

are provided by way of a separate bookmark called the *Tabula Accentuum*. The *Tabula Accentuum* consists of two separate sets of Masoretic accents. The first is called the *Accentus communes* and can be applied to the so-called twenty-one prose books of the Old Testament, while the second is called the *Accentus poetici* and can be applied to the three so-called poetic books of the Old Testament, namely Psalms, Job and Proverbs.

¹¹⁴ According to Kelly (1992:16) Hebrew accents had a threefold purpose. First, the Masoretic accents would indicate which syllable in a word would be accentuated. Furthermore, this would regulate the intonations when the psalms were sung or chanted together in the synagogues. Finally, Masoretic accents serves as punctuation marks, indicating how the structure of a sentence was perceived at the time. Simply put, by Scott (1987:25) Masoretic accents are cantillation marks which also serve as accentuation marks and indicates semantic division.

¹¹⁵ Masoretic accents are divided into two separate groups, each serving a unique function. These groups are “disjunctive” accents and “conjunctive” accents. While disjunctive accents serve the purpose of dividing the text into meaningful semantic units (note that semantic units and syntactical units do not always coincide), conjunctive accents generally serve the purpose of linking words together to form meaningful units of thought.

¹¹⁶ Demarcating disjunctive.

¹¹⁷ Accompanying disjunctive.

Atn(1)	--	אַרְחִי וְרַבְעֵי זְרִיתִי	3a	3	Bi	My wandering and my lying down you measure off;
Sil(0)	--	וְכָל־דַּרְכֵי הַסִּבְנֹתָהּ:	b			and all my ways you are familiar with.
Atn(1)	Tip	כִּי אֵין מִלָּה בְּלִשׁוֹנִי	4a	4	Bi	For not a word is in my tongue,
Sil(0)	RebM	הֵן יְהוָה יִדְעֵת כְּלָהּ:	b			behold! YHWH you know all of her.
Atn(1)	--	אַחֹר וּקְדָם צָרַתְנִי	5a	5	Bi	Behind and in front you shut me in;
Sil(0)	Tip	וַתִּשֵּׂת עָלַי כַּפְּכָהּ:	b			and you have laid on me your hand.
Atn(1)	--	(פְּלִיאָה) [פְּלִיאָה] דַּעַת מִמּוֹנִי	6a	6	Bi	Wonderful is this knowledge for me;
Sil(0)	RebM	נִשְׁגָּבָה לֹא־אוּכַל לָהּ:	b			unattainable, I am not able to her.
Atn(1)	Tip	אַנְה אֵלֶךְ מִרוּחְךָ	7a	7	Bi	Where do I go from your spirit;
Sil(0)	RebM	וְאַנְה מִפְּנֵיךְ אֲבָרַח:	b			and where from your face I fled?
Atn(1)	Tip	אִם־אֶסַּק שָׁמַיִם שָׁם אֲתָה	8a	8	Bi	If I climbed up the heavens there you are;
Sil(0)	Tip	וְאֲצִיעָה שְׂאוֹל הַנֶּדֶךְ:	b			and I spread out in Sheol, behold! you are there!
Atn(1)	--	אֲשָׂא כְנָפַי־שָׁחַר	9a	9	Bi	I rise up on wings of the dawn;
Sil(0)	RebM	אֲשִׁכְנָה בְּאַחֲרֵית יָם:	b			I dwelled in the ends of the sea
Atn(1)	Tip	גַּם־שָׁם יָדְךָ תִּנְחֵנִי	10a	10	Bi	also there you hand she guides me;

Sil(0)	--	וְתִאָחֲזֵנִי יְמִינֶךָ:	b			and she grasps me your right hand.
Atn(1)	--	וְאָמַר אֶךְ-חֹשֶׁךְ יִשׁוּפְנֵי	11a	11	Bi	And I said, surely darkness cover me.
Sil(0)	RebM	וְלַיְלָה אֹרֶךְ בְּעַדְנִי:	b			and the night becomes light of day around me.
OleW (1)	--	גַּם-חֹשֶׁךְ לֹא-יִחְשֶׁךְ מִמּוֹךְ	12a	12	Tri	Also the darkness does not become dark for you;
Atn(1)	--	וְלַיְלָה כְּיוֹם יֹאִיר	b			and the night shines like the day,
Sil(0)	RebM	כְּחֹשֶׁיכָה כְּאוֹרָה:	c			the darkness shines like the light.
Atn(1)	--	כִּי-אַתָּה קָנִיתָ כְּלֵי־	13a	13	Bi	Because you create my kidneys;
Sil(0)	RebM	חֶסְפֵי בִבְטֶן אִמִּי:	b			you weaved me in the womb of my mother.
OleW (1)	RebQ	אֹדְךָ עַל כִּי נִרְאֹת נִפְלִיֹתִי	14a	14	Tri	I praise you because fearfully I am distinct;
Atn(1)	--	נִפְלְאִים מַעֲשֶׂיךָ	b			wonderfully are your works
Sil(0)	RebM	וְנַפְשִׁי יֹדַעַת מְאֹד:	c			and my soul knowing this abundance.
OleW (1)	RebG	לֹא-נִכְחַד עֲצָמֵי מִמֶּךָ	15a	15	Tri	Not it was hidden my bones from you
Atn(1)	--	אֲשֶׁר-עָשִׂיתִי בַסֶּתֶר	b			when I was made in the hiding place,
Sil(0)	RebM	רְקִמְתִּי בַתְּחִתִּיֹת אֲרִץ:	c			I was woven in the lowest of the earth.
RebG (2)	Meh	גַּלְמִי רָאוּ עֵינֶיךָ	16a	16	Quad	My formless mass your eyes did see;

OleW (1)	--	וְעַל־סֵפֶרְךָ כָּלֵם יִכְתְּבוּ	b			and in your book all of them were written,
Atn(1)	--	יָמִים יִצְרוּ	c			the days were formed
Sil(0)	Tip	(וְלֹא) וְלֹאן אֶחָד בָּהֶם:	d			and not to him one was there.
Atn(1)	--	וְלִי מִה־יִקְרוּ רַעֲיָךְ אֵל	17a	17	Bi	And for me, how precious are your thoughts?
Sil(0)	--	מִה עֲצֹמוֹ רֵאשִׁיָּהֶם:	b			How numerous the totalities of them?
Atn(1)	--	אֶסְפָּרָם מִחֹל יִרְבוּן	18a	18	Bi	I counted them they was numerous, more than sand;
Sil(0)	RebM	הִקְיֹצְתִי וְעוֹדִי עִמָּךְ:	b			I awake and still I am with you.
Atn(1)	--	אִם־תִּקְטַל אֱלֹהִים רָשָׁע	19a	19	Bi	God, if you killed the wicked;
Sil(0)	RebM	וְאֲנָשֵׁי דָמִים סוּרוּ מִנִּי:	b			and men of blood turn away from me!
Atn(1)	Tip	אֲשֶׁר יֹאמְרֵךְ לְמִזְמָה	20a	20	Bi	They who speak of evil plan against you;
Sil(0)	RebM	נָשָׂא לְשׂוֹא עֲרִיף:	b			they raised to misuse your name, your adversaries.
Atn(1)	Tip	הֲלוֹא־מִשְׁנֵאִיךְ יְהוּהוּ אֲשֵׁנָא	21a	21	Bi	If not YHWH your haters, I hated;
Sil(0)	RebM	וּבִתְקוּמָיִךְ אֶתְקוּטָט:	b			and those who rise up against you, I loathe?
Atn(1)	--	תְּכַלִּית שְׂנֵאָה שְׂנֵאָתִים	22a	22	Bi	With extremity of hatred, I hate them

Sil(0)	RebM	לְאוֹיְבִים הָיוּ לִי:	b			for they are enemies to me.
Atn(1)	Tip	חִקְרָנִי אֵל וְדַע לְבָבִי	23a	23	Bi	God, you must search me and you must know my heart!
Sil(0)	RebM	בְּחַנְנֵי וְדַע שְׂרַעַפִּי:	b			You must examine me and you must know my disquieting thoughts!
Atn(1)	--	וּרְאֵה אִם־דֶּרֶךְ־עֲצָב בִּי	24a	24	Bi	And you must see if the way of idol is in me,
Sil(0)	RebM	וְנַחֲנֵי בְּדֶרֶךְ עוֹלָם:	b			and you must lead me in the way everlasting.

3.7 Structural and content analysis

3.7.1 Introduction

Due to the distinctive nature of Psalm 139, there is quite a difference of opinion on how the psalm should structurally be divided.¹¹⁸ It is undeniable that the call on YHWH to ward off the wicked in verses 19-22, completely disrupts not only the pleasant mood and tone of the psalm but also does not parallel the metre of verses 1-18 and 23-24. For this reason, scholars are yet to reach agreement on the structural division of Psalm 139.

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

The first trend is to divide Psalm 139 into multiple stanzas. This trend dates as far back as Calvin (1898:908-919), who advocates for a five-part division of Psalm 139. Another campaigner of the five-part strophic structure of Psalm 139 is Prinsloo (1994:125). However, each one's five-part division of Psalm 139 uniquely differs to such an extent

¹¹⁸ See Chapter 2, section 2.2.1 "Unity and division of Psalm 139."

that their strophic structures of the psalm are irreconcilable. On the other hand, Eaton (1967:301-302) divides Psalm 139 into three units, instead of five, respectively grouping verses 1-12, 13-18 and 19-24. The most popular structural division of Psalm 139, subscribed to by most scholars, is a four-part division of the text. The demarcation of the four separate stanzas that are widely agreed on are: verses 1-6; 7-12; 13-18 and 19-24. Proponents of this particular four-part division includes Allen (2002:327), Brueggemann & Bellinger (2014:580-581), Hossfeld & Zenger (2011:539), Kraus (1989:515-517) and Terrien (2003:872-874). The main reason given to support this four-part division of the psalm is that every introductory verse that introduces a new stanza, serves as a title to the upcoming stanza, and tells the reader what the theme of the upcoming stanza will be.¹¹⁹

A second tendency to structurally divide Psalm 139 is seen in Mowinckel's (1992:75) effort to divide the psalm into two main stanzas. This approach mainly relies on the mood of the psalm to guide the division of the text. By nature, Psalm 139 is then divided between verses 18 and 19. The first stanza, consisting of verses 1-18, focuses primarily on the omniscience, omnipresence and omnipotence of YHWH in contrast to humanity's vanity and limited ability. This part of the psalm is coloured with a mood of adoration and humility. The second stanza, consisting of verses 19-24, is a distinct call on YHWH to overthrow the injustices of the psalmist's oppressors by way of YHWH's omniscience, omnipresence and omnipotence as emphasised in the first stanza. This part of the psalm, in contrast to its preceding stanza, is coloured with hatred and vengeance.

The third approach to Psalm 139 is to treat it as a complete unit despite the mixed form in which it appears. Proponents of this tendency choose to ignore the mixture of moods Psalm 139 consists of, by insisting that psalms can have a mixed form. The unity of Psalm 139 is further motivated by pointing to the fact that Psalm 139 is continuously addressed to YHWH, even throughout the controversial verses 19-22.

¹¹⁹ Terrien (2003:875) identifies the introductory title/verse to each stanza, as follows:

- Stanza I: God's perfect knowledge of man.
- Stanza II: The psalmist's search for places to flee from God.
- Stanza III: The wonderful creation of man.
- Stanza IV: God's persistent search for man.

Consequently, Psalm 139 adopts the form of a hymn that serves to exalt YHWH through the positive as well as the negative tones present in the psalm (Gunkel, 1926:587).

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

- A strophic structure of Psalm 139 usually fails to pay attention to the transition between the stanzas. Failing to bring the great difference in meter and style between the different stanzas into consideration and failing to bridge the gap undermines the unity of the psalm.
- An argument can be made that there are two mainstream thoughts in Psalm 139: that of verses 1-18 and that of verses 19-24. However, there is no basis to deal with these two parts separately.
- Although it seems like the division between verses 18 and 19 is insurmountable, the unity of Psalm 139 is emphasised by the *inclusio* that appears in verses 1 and 23. Therefore the psalm must be thoroughly searched for words, verses and strophes that delicately weave the psalm to a unique entity and therefore confirms the unity of the psalm.

To remedy the above-mentioned possible structural divisions of Psalm 139 as well as Holman's critical remarks on the structural division of Psalm 139, Hossfeld & Zenger (2011:538) suggests that recent research should attempt to report on the psalmist's thought process by way of systematically expounding the poetic structure of the psalm. The present study will do nothing less, exegetically elucidating the poetic structure of the psalm as a means of drafting the individual philosophical method of this psalm. The present study of Psalm 139 presents the following structural analysis:

3.7.2 Structural analysis of Psalm 139 ¹²⁰

HEADING: For the supervisor. To David. A psalm. (v. 1a)

STANZA I: YHWH knows the psalmist and is accustomed to the ways of the psalmist.
(vv. 1b-6)

STROPHE A: YHWH knows every word and way of the psalmist. (vv. 1b-4)

STROPHE B: YHWH fortifies the psalmist from all sides. (vv. 5-6)

STANZA II: The psalmist cannot flee from the presence of YHWH. (vv. 7-12)

STROPHE C: YHWH is present beyond spatial and temporal constraints.
(vv. 7-10)

STROPHE D: Not even the darkness can hide the psalmist. (vv. 11-12)

STANZA III: YHWH was present even before the birth of the psalmist, and will remain present throughout every day of the psalmist's life. (vv. 13-18)

STROPHE E: YHWH was present while the psalmist was still in the mother's womb. (vv. 13-14)

STROPHE F: Nothing is hidden from YHWH. (vv. 15-16)

STROPHE G: The psalmist's response to YHWH's presence and knowledge.
(vv. 17-18)

STANZA IV: The psalmist calls on YHWH to destroy all wickedness. (vv. 19-22)

STROPHE H: Despite YHWH's piercing presence throughout creation, there remain wicked people who rebel against YHWH.
(vv. 19-20)

STROPHE I: The adversaries of YHWH are also the adversaries of the psalmist. (vv. 21-22)

STANZA V: The psalmist submission under the presence of YHWH. (vv. 23-24)

STROPHE J: Be in me: Examine my heart! (v. 23)

STROPHE K: Be around me: Lead me! (v. 24)

¹²⁰ For a graphic exposition of the structural analysis, see Addendum B

3.7.3 Content analysis of Psalm 139

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

The psalm opens with a superscription in verse 1a, accrediting the psalm to the pen of David. According to Terrien (2003:875), this superscription was only attributed to the psalm by post-exilic editors of the *Psalter* and does not point to original authorship. Scroggie (1978:42) insists that even though the linguistics of the psalm does not necessarily follow the classical davidic penmanship and the number of Aramaisms present in the psalm points to a later date of origin, the value of the psalm cannot be deduced to its authorship. The **מְזִמֹּר** (song/psalm) is connected with the name of king David in at least thirty-five instances throughout the *Psalter*, rendering this superscription quite common and by no means unique.

Stanza I: YHWH knows the psalmist and is accustomed to the ways of the psalmist.

YHWH knows! This short sentence summarises the content and theme of the first stanza of Psalm 139. The psalmist knows that YHWH knows! This slightly longer sentence summarises the content and theme of the first eighteen verses of Psalm 139. The opening stanza introduces the reader to YHWH, a deity that is intimately acquainted with every movement the psalmist makes and deeply familiar with every intention of the psalmist's heart. This penetrating knowledge of YHWH moves the psalmist to eulogise YHWH's omniscience and omnipresence throughout the following eighteen verses.

Strophe A: YHWH knows every word and way of the psalmist.

With the opening words of the psalm in verse 1b, the reader's attention is focused on YHWH's intimate acquaintance with the psalmist. The verb **חָקַר** can be translated with 'to search' or 'to explore'. This term is used to express YHWH's perfect awareness of the individual's every deed and every word. Allen (2002:327) suggests that in the Old Testament terms such as **יָדַע** (to know), **חָקַר** (to search), **רָאָה** (to see) and **בָּחַן** (to examine) are used in reference to God to signify YHWH's judgeship. The judge-metaphor is portrayed in a positive

sense, in which YHWH has accumulated all the knowledge to rightfully cast judgement on the wicked while absolving the innocent. By maintaining YHWH's perfect knowledge, the psalmist implies that divine scrutiny has already taken place and thus demonstrates the psalmist's consciousness of the divine righteousness. The psalmist is in full compliance with YHWH's righteousness. The opening words of the psalm by no means illustrates an antagonism towards YHWH for curbing the psalmist's freedom. Instead, the freedom of the psalmist is emphasised by underscoring YHWH's knowledge of the psalmist irrespective of where the psalmist goes. The omniscience of YHWH is demonstrated and emphasised by the repeated use of the word **יָדָע** (to know) in verses 1b, 2a, 4b.

Strophe B: YHWH fortifies the psalmist from all sides.

The psalmist is astonished at the mystery of YHWH's intimate acquaintance with the individual's inner- and outermost being. Not only is YHWH intimately familiar with the psalmist, but YHWH shields the psalmist from all sides. The psalmist acknowledges YHWH's knowledge and expresses adoration at it in verse 6: "*Such knowledge is too wonderful for me, too lofty for me to attain.*" Scroggie (1978:47) both creatively and accurately describes the psalmist's wonder at YHWH's knowledge and fortification by stating that "*...no more than a teacup can hold the ocean can a finite mind comprehend the infinite...*" The psalmist attempts to express amazement at what is ultimately indescribable.

Stanza II: The psalmist cannot flee from the presence of YHWH.

The interrogative pronoun **אֵי** (where?) introduces a new section using two questions: "*Where can I go from your Spirit?*" and "*Where can I flee from your presence?*" These two questions set the tone for the interpretation of the rest of the stanza. Battenwieser (1938:536) reckons that these two questions summarise the all-absorbing theme of Psalm 139, namely the psalmist's realisation of the inescapability of YHWH's presence. What follows is a rhetoric line of questioning that unveils the psalmist's

realisation of the greatest truth of all time: There is no escape from the presence of the Almighty God.¹²¹

Strophe C: YHWH is present beyond spatial and temporal constraints.

Four possible hiding places are proposed by the psalmist, each with the same outcome: YHWH is already there! The question could however be raised: Does the psalmist experience YHWH's omnipresence as positive and freeing, or as negative and restrictive? Terrien (2003:877) suggests that the phraseology used by the psalmist possibly indicates an antagonistic and/or insufferable situation. The word בָּרַח (flee) used in verse 7 indicates an act of attempting to escape someone or something.¹²² Terrien poses the question: "*Why should this exemplary and ardent devotee of Yahweh flee from the 'Spirit' and the 'face' of the Lord?*" The words רוּחַ (spirit) and פְּנֵיהֶם (face) used in conjunction with YHWH is synonymous with the presence of YHWH. Exell (1973:305) suggests that the psalmist possibly found unrest in the overshadowing of the divine presence because of a "*load upon his conscience and torturing guilt in his heart.*" From this point of view, the psalmist attempted to flee the presence of YHWH because of sin that provoked YHWH's wrath. In this stanza, the spatial as well as the temporal aspect of YHWH's presence, is articulated. The first merism illustrating YHWH's inescapable presence is that of verse 8: שָׁמַיִם (heaven) versus שְׂאוֹל (Sheol). These concepts underline a spatial understanding of the divine omnipresence.¹²³ In verse 9 כַּנְּפֵי־שָׁחַר (wings of

¹²¹ According to Pressler (2003:92) the psalmist's interjections "*Where can I go from your Spirit?*" and "*Where can I flee from your presence?*" gains lucidity in light of the psalmist's prior declaration "*You know me!*" By this measure, the psalmist's outcry is more than just an exclamation of the realisation of YHWH's omnipresence, but rather an expression of a personal relationship that exists between the psalmist and YHWH. Within the context of a personal relationship with YHWH, the omnipresence of YHWH becomes a sanctuary to the psalmist.

¹²² Examples in the Old Testament where the use of the term בָּרַח (flee) implies moving away from a situation, can be found in Gn 16:8; 31:27; Ex 2:15; 1 Ki 2:7; 12:2; Job 27:22 (Terrien, 2005:877).

¹²³ Ancient Near Eastern spatial awareness plays an important role in the interpretation of v. 8. The Ancient Near Eastern perception underlying the terms שָׁמַיִם (heaven) and שְׂאוֹל (Sheol) is that every sphere of life (i.e. earth, heaven and the underworld) has its own deity that reigns there. This thinking is embodied in the psalmist's use of the terms 'heaven' and 'Sheol' in Psalm 139. YHWH's throne is considered to be seated in heaven (Wyatt, 2001:76). By acknowledging the presence of YHWH in Sheol, the psalmist undermines the Ancient Near Eastern polytheistic understanding of 'different gods

the dawn) and **בְּאַחֲרֵי יָם** (in the ends of the sea) respectively refers to the rising and the setting of the sun.¹²⁴ Both merisms serves the purpose of emphasising that no time nor place is a hindrance for the presence of YHWH.

Strophe D: Not even the darkness can hide the psalmist.

The etymology of **שׁוּף** remains indeterminate. The Hebrew **שׁוּף** denotes ‘to crush’¹²⁵ of which the term ‘to cover completely’ can be derived. To some commentators, the phrase **אֶדְ-חֹשֶׁךְ יִשׁוּפְנִי** (surely darkness covered me) signifies the use of magic in which darkness is called upon to obscure the psalmist (Eaton, 1967:302). Kraus (1989:515) concur that this phrase points to the summoning of the supernatural¹²⁶. However, Anderson (1992:908) stands firm that the term **חֹשֶׁךְ** (darkness) does not point to the use of magic arts in any form, but is simply used as a metaphor to exemplify the extreme distress experienced by the psalmist. The translation: “...*the darkness will hide me...*” communicates an emotion of fear/despair and does not necessarily refer to the use of magic, but rather to a need for protection.¹²⁷ The **לַיְלָה** (night) and **יָם**

in different spheres’ by placing the domain of the underworld within YHWH’s control. By attributing the domains of heaven as well as the underworld to YHWH’s presence, the psalmist not only identifies the spatial omnipresence of YHWH, but manifests a definite monotheistic understanding of YHWH’s rule.

¹²⁴ With a few exceptions, scholars agree that this merism refers to the cardinal directions, east and west, thus the furthest corners of the earth (Allen, 2002:251; Anderson, 1972:908; Briggs & Briggs, 1969:494; Vos, 2005:197). Consequently, the merism of **כַּנְפֵי-שָׁחַר** (wings of the dawn) and **בְּאַחֲרֵי יָם** (in the ends of the sea) is understood as demonstrative of YHWH’s presence from horizon to horizon, from sea to sea (Harmon, 2007:782). However, ‘wings of the dawn’ and ‘the ends of the sea’ can also be read as temporal terms indicating YHWH’s presence within the constraints of time. Read in conjunction with v. 10 the psalmist demonstrates that YHWH is present from the time the psalmist awakes as well as when the sun sets and the psalmist settles in for the night.

¹²⁵ The term **שׁוּף** occurs only on two other occasions in the Old Testament: Gn. 3:15 and Job 9:18. In both instances it is translated with the “to crush” (Prinsloo, 1994:127). In Gn. 3:15 the word **שׁוּף** (to crush) is used in reference to what the woman and her offspring will do to the snake’s head. Conclusively, the term **שׁוּף** (to crush) implies hostility.

¹²⁶ The manipulation of magic as narrative motif occurs in Gn. 19:11 and 1 Ki. 6:18.

¹²⁷ A text-critical note regarding the Hebrew text states that the Symmachus and Greek translation of the word **יִשׁוּפְנִי** (he covered me) has two possible stem forms. The first possibility is **שָׁכַף** (to hold on to) and the second possibility is **סָכַף** (to isolate). The former presupposes YHWH’s protection, while the latter implies a form of control.

(day) of verse 12 are mainly regarded as temporal terms, once again emphasising YHWH's omnipresence extending beyond the borders of time. The comfort in this strophe is rooted in the fact that even the psalmist's most distressing situation remains accessible and manageable to YHWH, for even the ominousness of the לַיְלָה (night) becomes like the auspiciousness of the אֹר (day) to the eyes of YHWH.

Stanza III: YHWH was present even before the birth of the psalmist, and will remain present throughout the days of the psalmist's life.

In this stanza, the knowledge of an omniscient and omnipresent God is personalised to the psalmist's unique experience. To this end, the psalmist employs the mystery of man's formation in the mother's womb and YHWH's participation in this ultimate act of creation.

Strophe E: YHWH was present while the psalmist was still in the mother's womb.

The psalmist praises YHWH for the supernatural act of man's creation. The Hebrew phrase בְּיִצְאָתָהּ קִנִּיתִי כְּלִיָּתִי can roughly be translated with "*because you create my kidneys*". Kidneys are synonymous with the secrets of the human being.¹²⁸ The כְּלִיָּה (kidneys) and the בֶּטֶן (womb) forms interesting parallelism of anatomical foreknowledge. The psalmist hereby demonstrates that YHWH knows the human being even to the finest scientific details.

Strophe F: Nothing is hidden from YHWH.

This strophe sets out to emphasise that the complexity of man's conception, birth and life holds no secret to an all-knowing deity. Hossfeld & Zenger (2011:542) observe that the word רָקַם (weave) in verse 15 is a term denoting

¹²⁸ According to Smith (1998:429) the kidneys are the part of the human body that YHWH inspects to detect the virtuousness and/or wickedness hidden within humankind. Other examples include: Pss. 7:10; 11:2; 26:2; 73:21; Jr 11:20 and 17:10. This metaphor thus illustrates more than just God's involvement in the creation of humankind, it further indicates that YHWH is intimately acquainted with humankind's every intention, thus knowing whether the psalmist harbours evil or pure intentions.

a specific technique of embroidering,¹²⁹ thus emphasising YHWH's formation of the human being as equal to a form of art. In verse 16 YHWH's sovereignty over time is once again emphasised, for the unborn, unformed, embryonic body of the psalmist already had a preordained life that was carefully planned and written down by the hand of YHWH.¹³⁰ In this strophe, it is clear that not only is God involved in the process of creation, but even after birth, there is continued participation of God through the demarcation of the psalmist's life.

Strophe G: The psalmist's response to YHWH's presence and knowledge.

This strophe is an exclamation of reverence. In verses 17-18 we find the psalmist's response to the inescapable presence and piercing knowledge of YHWH. The psalmist considers YHWH's thoughts to be יקר (precious) instantaneously negating arguments made that the psalmist finds YHWH's presence insufferable. The psalmist is so overawed at the contemplation of YHWH's intimate engagement in the life of man, that the magnitude of YHWH's רע (thoughts) are briefly considered.¹³¹ The psalmist pauses for a while to count them but finds that it is incalculable. An equation of the abundance of YHWH's thoughts are given by way of a well-known image in the Old Testament: that of uncountable grains of sand.¹³² Then the psalmist closes the third stanza with the words הִקִּיצְתִּי וְעוֹדִי עִמָּךְ (I awake and still I am with You). Clifford (2003:282) states that the language of intimacy is employed to underline the fact that the psalmist does not feel threatened by YHWH's omnipresence and omnipotence, but finds comfort in the knowledge of God's proximity. The psalmist finds consolation within the margins of divine consciousness.

¹²⁹ According to Hossfeld & Zenger (2011:542) the same term was used in the instruction to the making of the curtain to the entrance of the Tabernacle in Ex. 26:36 and 27:16.

¹³⁰ The idea of a pre-recorded life stems from the Mesopotamic concept of "tablets of fate" on which the gods have inscribed the fate of the human being (Hossfeld & Zenger, 2011:542).

¹³¹ Allen (2002:330) states the antithesis that while the psalmist's thoughts are thoroughly known by YHWH (v. 2) YHWH's thoughts remain hidden from the psalmist (v. 17).

¹³² Cf. Gn 22:17; 28:14; 32:13.

Stanza IV: The psalmist calls on YHWH to destroy all wickedness.

In the foregoing verses, the psalmist authenticates community with YHWH by the following means: First, the psalmist acknowledges the perfect insight of YHWH into man's thoughts, words and actions. Second, the psalmist comes to peace with the constant watchful eye of the Almighty. Third, the psalmist reveres YHWH as the life-giving Creator that is involved in human life, even before birth. Having established community with YHWH as concerned Creator and coming to peace with the divine presence, the psalmist now turns to YHWH as wilful Sustainer. In stanza IV the psalmist prays to YHWH to intervene in an insufferable situation, counting on the presence and perfect knowledge of YHWH to uphold the psalmist's honour, which comes under fire by evil oppressors.

Strophe H: In spite of YHWH's piercing presence throughout creation, there remain wicked people who rebel against YHWH.

A prayer can be heard to the intervention of YHWH in the situation of the psalmist (Hossfeld & Zenger, 2011:542). The urgency of this strophe is underlined by the way YHWH is addressed. As opposed to the title of choice in the foregoing verses, namely יהוה (YHWH), the psalmist now employs the title אלהים (God).¹³³ Furthermore, a new association is introduced to the reader. Where verses 1-18 introduces the association between the psalmist and YHWH, this strophe introduces a third party, namely the רשע (wicked). With the introduction of this new association, the dynamic of the relationship between the psalmist and YHWH is immediately altered and the peaceful tone of the foregoing verses is replaced with a tone of belligerence. The psalmist, however, makes it clear that any and all aggression directed toward this third party is based on their intention towards the psalmist's Creator-god.¹³⁴ Briggs & Briggs (1969:499) describe the wicked as "*those who seek to injure by falsehood and misrepresentation.*" This interpretation sees the wicked as offenders against the

¹³³ According to Hossfeld & Zenger (2011:543) the divine title אלהים (God) is particular to the book of Job and is regarded as an Aramaism.

¹³⁴ Rice (1980:67) points out the possibility to distort YHWH's will so that it becomes one's own. In vv. 1-18 the psalmist underlines the fact that YHWH's thoughts transcend all human understanding. Now, in the same breath, the psalmist claims to know YHWH's thoughts about the wicked and what their punishment, according to YHWH's judgement, must be.

psalmist, not YHWH. Allen (1977:15) supports this notion that the psalmist's appeal is for fortification against the psalmist's adversaries.¹³⁵ According to Anderson (1972:911), some exegetes revise the Masoretic text's *yōm^erūḳā* into *yamrūḳā* altering the translation as follows: 'they rebel against you.' Even without this alteration of the Masoretic text, the content makes it clear that offenders direct their abuse against YHWH and not the psalmist. The psalmist calls on YHWH to let justice and righteousness prevail, not on the psalmist's behalf, but on behalf of YHWH.

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

A realisation of divine presence takes hold of the psalmist who, based on the intimacy established with YHWH in verses 1-18, takes any enemy of YHWH as his/her own. This notion is affirmed by two means: First, the psalmist asks a rhetoric question with an implied affirmative answer. This is followed by a direct statement expressing revulsion against the so-called haters of YHWH. In this strophe, the psalmist takes a stand to the condemnation of evil oppressors.

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

This final stanza offers the reader a final conclusive remark that rouses the probability that Psalm 139 should be read as a whole, without viewing selected parts as later additions to the text. The psalm ends where it started, with God's knowing presence (Brown, 1996:283), and the psalmist's awareness of YHWH's awareness of him/her. The psalmist presents the self as the object of divine investigation, expressing a desire to honour YHWH during a process of examination.

Strophe J: Be in me: Examine my heart!

The same phraseology used in verse 1, is repeated in the conclusion to the psalm. YHWH is called to חקר (search) and to ידע (know) the psalmist. The psalmist's final plea is to be 'searched' and to be 'known' by YHWH, for the

¹³⁵ Allen (1977:15) uses Ps. 83:2 to support the view that the psalmist appeals to YHWH for fortification from the psalmist's own enemies by comparing the psalmist's choice of words to where the political rivals of Israel are described as the rivals of YHWH.

psalmist not to fall under the same misconduct as that of the accused. The psalmist is, however, thoroughly aware that the punishment for idol worship is death.¹³⁶ A glimmer of hesitation can be noted in the psalmist's wording-choice: "...test me and know my anxious thoughts." It is indeed a courageous request from someone who acknowledges God's wrath against the wicked.

Strophe K: Be around me: Lead me!

Finally, the psalmist expresses the desire to be guided by YHWH on an everlasting way – a way that YHWH Himself has chosen and approved for the psalmist. Würthwein (1957:913) suggests that the psalmist's choice of words עוֹלָם בְּדֶרֶךְ (in the way everlasting) signifies the way to the temple where YHWH, and only YHWH, is to be worshipped.

3.8 Poetic techniques

Psalms 139 is rich in poetic artistry and exhibits a wide variety of poetic techniques. In this section, these poetic techniques will be examined on the levels of sounds, patterns and semantics.¹³⁷

3.8.1 Sounds¹³⁸

Alliteration and assonance

Various instances of assonance and alliteration occur throughout Psalm 139. An example of assonance is seen in verse 1b through the repetition of the 'ā'- and 'a'-sounds: יְהוָה חִקְרָתָנִי וַתְּדַע: (y^ehwā ḥāqar^etanî watēdō'). Other examples of assonance include: verses 2a; 3a; 3b; 4a; 4b; 7b; 8a; 9a; 12b; 18b; 19a and 23b.

¹³⁶ Cf. Dt. 13:13-16 and 17:2-7.

¹³⁷ For a full exposition of poetic techniques, see Addendum C.

¹³⁸ Poetic techniques that occur on the level of sound or phonology is the most noticeable. This is due to the "sound-sequencing by means of a regular rhythmic progression of word-accent units" (Wendland, 2016:37).

An example of alliteration can be found in verse 3a through the repetition of the ‘r’-sound: זָרִית וְרַבְעִי אֶרְחִי (‘*orēhî w^erib^e’î zērîto*). Other examples of alliteration include: verses 11a; 12c; 13a and 15a.

These phonological features serve the purpose to emphasise. The assonance in verse 1b, for example, functions as an auditive aid to underscore the psalmist’s assertion that YHWH examines and fully comprehends the innermost workings of the human being. The ‘searching’ and ‘knowing’ of YHWH is a significant observation throughout Psalm 139. Utilising assonance within the first verse of the psalm serves to aid the reader in realising the theme of the content that is to follow.

Similarly, the alliteration found in verse 3a serves to emphasise, not only YHWH’s keen observation of the psalmist but also YHWH’s ready participation in the psalmist’s movement. In this instance, the alliteration is actively utilised to aurally foreground the notion that YHWH is a passive observer, but rather an active participant in the life of the psalmist.

In some cases, both assonance and alliteration are simultaneously employed to further lay weight on what is said.

Rhyme

Different forms of rhyme occur in Psalm 139. Similar to assonance and alliteration, rhyme serves the purpose of highlighting. Alter (2011:9) points out that rhyme is “a convention of linguistic ‘coupling’” that furthers the unique unity of what is written. Rhyme thus serves as a tool to pair words, lines and stanza together as a means to promote thought units.

In verse 3a/b end rhyme occurs through the repetition of the ‘ā’-sound (זָרִית / הַסִּכְנִתָּה). This rhyme serves to illustrate YHWH’s involvement in the life of the psalmist. Not only does YHWH זָרָה (measure of) the psalmist’s activities, but YHWH is also סִכַּן (familiar with) the behaviour of the psalmist. The rhyme seems to

emphasise the fact that YHWH not only knows what the psalmist is about to do, but that YHWH partakes in what is happening during a day in the life of the psalmist.

Another example of end rhyme can be found in verse 11a/b where rhyme occurs through the repetition of the ‘*l*’-sound (בַּעֲרָנִי / יְשׁוּפְנִי). This rhyme demonstrates the psalmist’s serious attempt to hide from the all-piercing eyes of YHWH. Darkness is called upon to נִשְׁרֶף (cover) the psalmist, while the light of day is requested to obscure the psalmist’s presence by turning into night בַּעֲרָ (around) the psalmist. This rhyme emphasises the psalmist’s endeavours to flee from an omniscient deity, only to realise in the next verse that it is an impossible undertaking.

End rhyme occurs once more in verse 16b/c through the repetition of the “*u*”-sound (יִצְרָו / יִכְתְּבוּ). This rhyme serves to highlight the fact that all the days of the psalmist, even those that are yet to come, are familiar to YHWH. No action or deed of the psalmist is a surprise to YHWH, for by YHWH יִצְרָו (they were formed) and יִכְתְּבוּ (they were written). According to Terrien (2003:878) by referring to the book in which YHWH has written down the days of the psalmist, the writer attempts to substantiate a desire to praise the Creator. If this observation is precise, then the end rhyme utilised here serves to underscore the reason for the psalmist’s highest regard for YHWH’s omniscience.

Inclusive rhyme is observed in verse 16d/17b through the repetition of the “*em*”-sound (רְאִישֵׁיהֶם / בְּהֶם). While end rhyme amplifies the text through “*the utilisation of recursive auditory patterns*” (Wendland, 2016:81), inclusive rhyme serves the purpose to draw attention to the phrase framed by the two verse lines. In the case of verse 16d/17b, the encircled verse line would be: ‘And for me, how precious are your thoughts?’ When read in conjunction with the end rhyme that occurs in verse 16b/c the psalmist’s veneration of YHWH becomes clear. YHWH’s all-knowing capabilities do not threaten but rather excites the psalmist. YHWH’s thoughts about the psalmist are no cause for alarm, it is much rather valued as a priceless treasure that should be cherished rather than despised.

Figura etymologica

In verse 12a a *Figura etymologica* of the root-form חַשֶׁךְ is used. The first use of the root is the noun חֹשֶׁךְ (darkness). The term *hōšek* (that is similarly utilised in v. 11) points to the underworld,¹³⁹ a term which invokes the quintessence of a very physical reality. On the other hand, the second use of this root is the Hifil form of the verb חִשְׁךָ (to make dark). The term יִחְשֶׁךְ (he becomes dark) points to the action of hiding and/or concealing. With the added negative particle לֹא (not), the action of *yahšik* becomes something that YHWH can control to the extent that even the darkness cannot hide or conceal things from YHWH's sight.

3.8.2 Patterns

*Repetition*¹⁴⁰

One of the most prominent features of Psalm 139 is the repetition of the word יָדַע (to know) in verse 1b, 2a, 4b, 14c, 23a and 23b. McCann (1996:1235) identifies this root as the key to understanding the psalm, as it addresses YHWH's awareness of all creation. Through this repetition the theme of Psalm 139 becomes evident: YHWH knows! Brueggemann & Bellinger (2014:582) concurs that YHWH's knowledge is visible throughout verses 1-18. Without laying the groundwork for understanding the breadth and depth of YHWH's knowledge in verses 1-18, the meaning of verses 19-24 will remain a mystery. It is because of YHWH's pre-eminent knowledge of the psalmist's unique circumstances that YHWH is also aware of that which threatens the psalmist.

¹³⁹ According to Dahood (1970:291) there are four terms used in Ps. 139 to indicate the underworld or Sheol: "darkness" and "the night" in v. 11 as well as "hiding place" and "the lowest of the earth" in v. 15.

¹⁴⁰ Wendland (2000:cxvi) states that while repetition is one of the main characteristics of poetry in any language, it especially holds true for Hebrew poetry, where the repetition of sounds, grammatical structures and meanings serve the purpose of elucidating the theme and line of thought of the poem.

Repetition also occurs in verses 11a, 12a and 12c with the recurrence of the root-form of the word חֹשֶׁךְ (darkness). The psalmist contemplates being hidden by darkness, only to be disillusioned by the realisation that YHWH's eyes can pierce through the darkness as if it is the light of day. Hossfeld & Zenger (2011:541) suggest that the repetition of the concept of 'darkness' points to creation theology in the light of Genesis 1:1-5. Darkness thus refers to chaotic disorder. What the psalmist therefore, tries to convey is that YHWH is always present, even in the chaotic mess in which the human being sometimes is trapped in.

Following the rhetoric questions of verse 7 (Where can I go from your Spirit? Where can I flee from your presence?) a list of hypothetical settings is given. The list of hypothetical settings spatially and temporally relates the psalmist's life to the universality of YHWH (Allen, 1977:12). One of the theoretical settings that cannot hide the psalmist is the night. In verse 11b וְלַיְלָה אֹר בְּעֵדְנִי (and the night becomes light of day around me) and verse 12b וְלַיְלָה כַּיּוֹם יֵאָר (and night like the day he shines) it is emphasised through repetition that even the night is like daylight to YHWH.

Within the notorious verses, 19-22 repetition is once again utilised to call attention to the psalmist's stance against the enemies of YHWH. In verses 21a, 21b and 22a the repetition of the root שָׂנֵא (hate) insistently illustrate the psalmist's bearing towards those who rise against YHWH. Although the serene setting of verses 1-18 seems disrupted by the incessant use of this emotion-filled term, it should be noted that the repetition is a protestation of the psalmist's innocence and an intentional siding with the righteous deity whose praises were raised in the foregoing verses.

Parallelism

Verses 2a and 2b illustrate synonymous parallelism¹⁴¹. Both lines refer to YHWH's knowledge of humankind. The psalmist declares that YHWH יָדַע (knows) the psalmist's sitting down and rising. Furthermore, the psalmist states that YHWH also

¹⁴¹ Synonymous parallelism occurs when lines are similar in meaning.

בִּין (discerns) every thought and intention of the psalmist. Allen (2002:327) understands this parallelism as YHWH being in charge of the movement and mind of humankind. There is, however, no indication that the verbs יִדְעֶתָּ (you know) and בִּנְתָהּ (you discern) implies that YHWH enforces the movement and thoughts of humankind in any way. This parallelism simply exhibits YHWH's knowledge of the psalmist as functioning on both the physical as well as the emotional/spiritual level. YHWH is not only familiar with the outward actions of the author but is fully aware of what is taking place within the mind of the psalmist as well.

Verses 7a and 7b similarly takes the form of synonymous parallelism. The author rhetorically asks whether it is possible to hide from YHWH. That which the psalmist attempts to escape is jointly the רוּחַ (spirit) as well as the פָּנֶיהָ (face) of YHWH. Briggs & Briggs (1969:493) suggests that the רוּחַ (spirit) of YHWH points to the omnipresence of YHWH.¹⁴² Equally, it can be pointed out that the פָּנֶיהָ (face) of YHWH also directs the reader's attention to the presence of YHWH in the same way in which Adam and Eve attempted to flee the presence of YHWH when they hid יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים מִפְּנֵי (away from the face of the Lord God).¹⁴³ Terrien (2003:877) suggests that the Spirit of God is the core reality of divinity and that the face of YHWH indicates a symbolic openness and the need for YHWH to be revealed. This parallelism serves to emphasise the rhetoric train of thought of the psalmist concerning the inescapability of YHWH's presence in all of creation.

Following the rhetoric questions of the psalmist in verse 7, is a list of juxtaposed locations, either spatial or temporal by nature that illustrates the total encompassing presence of YHWH. What follows is three antithetical parallelisms.¹⁴⁴

¹⁴² According to Briggs & Briggs (1969:493) the reference to the spirit of God should be understood in the light of Is. 63:9-10. In these verses the Spirit is identified with the invisible presence of YHWH during the events of the Exodus.

¹⁴³ Cf. Gn. 3:8.

¹⁴⁴ Antithetical parallelism occurs when lines contrasts or opposes each other.

The first of these antithetical parallelisms can be found in verse 8. Verses 8a and 8b form semantic parallelism pertaining to the omnipresence of YHWH. To **סֶלַק** (climb up) to the **שָׁמַיִם** (heavens) does not benefit the psalmist in an attempt to escape YHWH's spirit and/or face. Jointly, to **יָצַע** (spread out) in the **שְׁאוֹל** (underworld) turns out to be a fruitless endeavour to elude the presence of an all-pervading God. Vos (2005:197) accurately observes that the parallel between heaven and Sheol (or underworld) must be understood on a vertical axis as assumed in Ancient Near Eastern cosmology.¹⁴⁵ It is implied that even if the psalmist were to climb up to heaven, where YHWH's throne is located, or if he goes down to the grave, which by implication is the furthest point removed from YHWH's throne, YHWH would still be present there.¹⁴⁶

The second antithetical parallelism in reply to the rhetoric questions of verse 7 can be found in verse 9a and 9b. Whereas verse 8 should be read in conjunction with the vertical axis of the Ancient Near Eastern cosmology, verse 9 should be read within the framework of the horizontal axis. Scholars principally agree that **כַּנְפֵי-שָׁחַר** (the wings of the dawn) must be understood as the East (the place where the sun rises for daybreak), while **בְּאַחֲרֵית יָם** (the ends of the sea) must be understood as the West (the place where the sun sets in the evening).¹⁴⁷ While 'heaven' and 'Sheol' are cosmographic concepts, 'the wings of dawn' and 'the ends of the sea' are geographical

¹⁴⁵ According to Ancient Near Eastern cosmology every sphere of life on a vertical axis (i.e. heaven, earth and the underworld) were each ruled by its own deity. Traditionally, YHWH's dwelling is in heaven. Consequently Sheol (or the underworld) would be totally abandoned by YHWH (Segal, 2013:655). It is much more common to find the psalms subscribing to this theory, for example Pss. 6:6 and 31:18 unequivocally states that Sheol is a place where YHWH cannot be praised on account of YHWH's absence there. Eaton (1967:302) hypothesises that because Sheol is considered a profane space it is inaccessible to a holy deity such as YHWH. Allen (2002:329) contributes to this notion by adding that although Sheol falls within the sphere of YHWH's sovereignty, it does not fall within the sphere of YHWH's blessing. However, the parallelism in v. 8 contradicts the theory of exegetes who reasons that Sheol is not accessible to the presence of YHWH. The use of the adverb **שָׁמָּה** (there) and the emphatic particle **הִנֵּה** (behold!) coupled with the pronominal suffix 2nd male singular 'you' not only confirms YHWH's knowledge (omniscience) of what takes place in Sheol, but also affirms YHWH's actual presence (omnipresence) in the realm of the dead.

¹⁴⁶ Cf. Am. 9:2.

¹⁴⁷ See Allen 1983:251; Anderson 1972:908; Briggs & Briggs 1969:494; Prinsloo 1994:127 and Vos 2005:197.

concepts (Keel, 1978:23). By using these metaphors, the psalmist asserts that in addition to YHWH's presence being cosmic, it is also global. Consequently, no sphere of the known human existence can veil the psalmist from YHWH's presence.

A third antithetical parallelism is given in reply to the rhetoric questions of verse 7. To contribute to the emphasis of this parallelism the psalmist uses the two pairs of synonyms לַיְלָה (night) and חֹשֶׁךְ (darkness) as well as יוֹם (day) and אֹר (light) alternately. In verses 11 and 12, the conjectural flight of the psalmist together with an understanding of the presence of YHWH reaches a climax, which is thoughtfully reflected in the choice of words. The psalmist's use of the terms לַיְלָה (night) and יוֹם (day) refers to the presence of YHWH on a horizontal axis of the Ancient Near Eastern cosmology (as seen in v. 9), while the use of the terms חֹשֶׁךְ (darkness) and אֹר (light) in turn refers to the presence of YHWH on a vertical axis (as seen in v. 8).¹⁴⁸

In verses 21 and 22 another synonymous parallelism can be noted. Alternating between the imperfect and perfect tenses of the root שָׂנֵא (hate) the psalmist first asks "*Do I not hate those who hate you, Lord?*" (in v. 21) before emphatically pronouncing "*I have nothing but hatred for them!*" (in v. 22). This time the poetic technique is employed to demonstrate the psalmist visibly taking a stand against the enemies of YHWH, and to show that the psalmist is wilfully siding with YHWH against the wicked and rebellious.

Parallelism is also used in the psalmist's final plea. In verse 23 a request is raised by the psalmist. The focal point of this parallelism is the duplicate use of the word וְדַע (and you must know) in verse 23a and 23b, a key term that is repeated six times throughout the psalm. The plea is for YHWH to know the psalmist's לִבָּב (heart) as well as for YHWH to know the psalmist's שֵׁרֵעֵפִים (disquieting thoughts). These terms, however, are interchangeable, for, in the idiom of the Bible, thinking and thoughts are

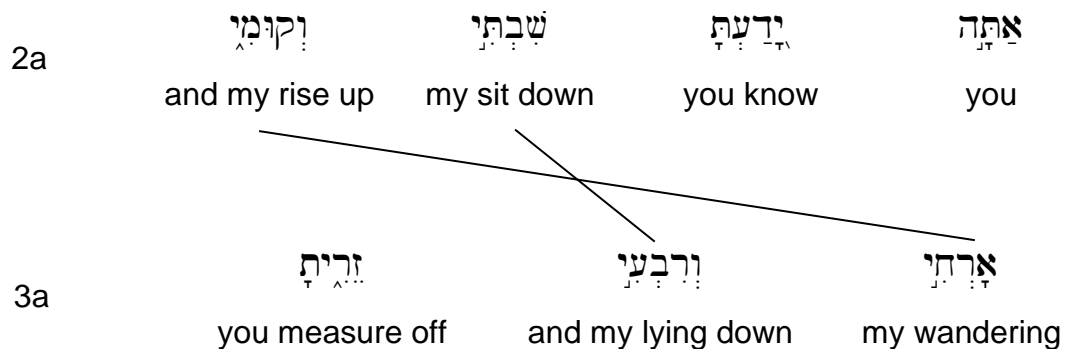
¹⁴⁸ See footnote 80 for an exposition of the use of the terms לַיְלָה (night) and יוֹם (day) as well as חֹשֶׁךְ (darkness) and אֹר (light).

not a function of the brain, but the heart.¹⁴⁹ The psalmist thus raises the same request twice. It should however, be noted that if these lines are paralleled, the nature of the psalmist's thoughts qualifies the heart's disposition, permitting the reader to mull over the condition of the psalmist's heart. What is disconcerting the author's heart to such an extent that disquieting thoughts are suffered?

*Chiasm*¹⁵⁰

As a rhetorical device, chiasms are inverted or mirrored structures of the text (Bliese, 1988:208) or as Stek (1974:24) puts it “a reversal of the order of components.” It does not occur as often in Psalm 139 as parallelism, but when chiasms are used it serves the purpose of emphasising on a certain word, phrase or line of thought.

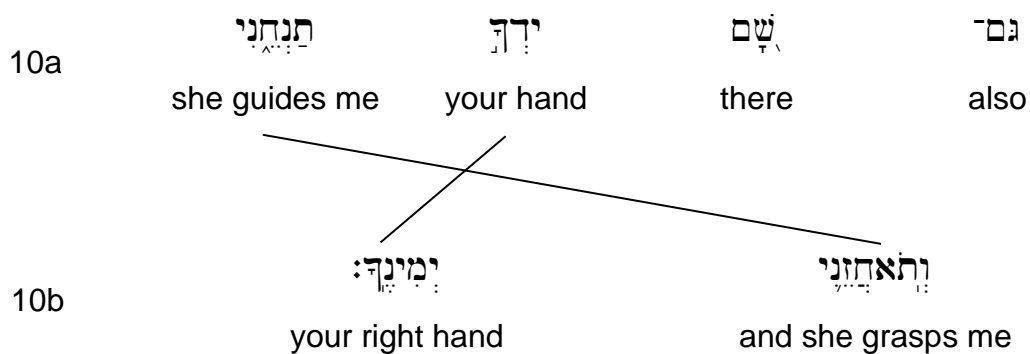
In verses 2a and 3a a chiasm is formed between the psalmist movement and being static. It emphasises YHWH's knowledge of the psalmist's life as a whole. Whether the psalmist is passive or active, whether the psalmist is sitting or lying down at home or is awakened and wandering about outside, YHWH knows and is present in both instances.



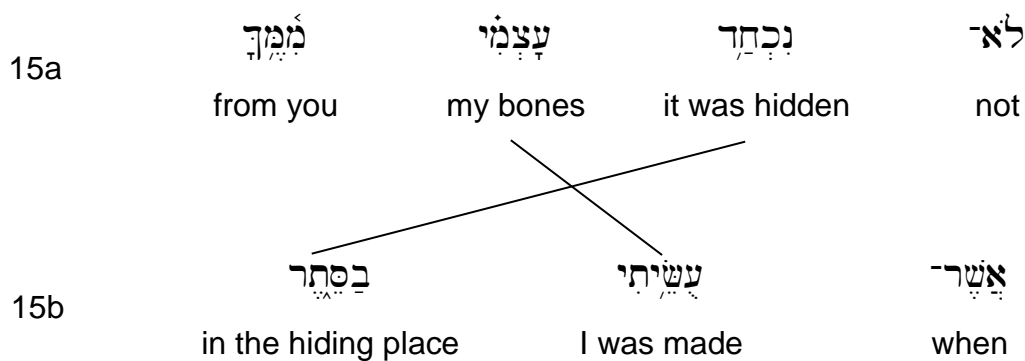
In verses 10a and 10b a chiasm is utilised to emphasise YHWH's (right) hand as the instrument of guidance and protection in the life of the psalmist.

¹⁴⁹ For examples of how thoughts and thinking are related to a function of the heart within the Bible, two notable Bible texts are that of 1 Sm. 1:13 where Hannah's prayer is thought or prayed “in her heart,” the other is Luke 2:19 where Mary contemplated everything that took place during Jesus' birth “in her heart” (Longman, Ryken & Wilhoit, 1998:369).

¹⁵⁰ All chiasms are derived from the Hebrew text. For practical purposes the chiasms are portrayed in Hebrew, with the English translation of the text given underneath.



The chiasm in verses 15a and 15b accentuates that not even the mystery of human formation before birth is a secret kept from YHWH. Even though the psalmist’s bones were hidden from the eyes of humankind, while the body of the psalmist was still to be formed inside the mother’s womb, the psalmist was exposed to the all-seeing eyes of an ever-present deity.



All of the above-mentioned chiasms serve to emphasise YHWH’s active involvement in the life of the psalmist.

3.8.3 Semantics

Inclusio

A noteworthy poetic technique in Psalm 139 is the *inclusio* that is formed in verses 1b and 23a by the repetition of the same keywords חָקַר (to search) and יָדַע (to know). This *inclusio* serves a twofold purpose. First, it serves the purpose of binding the psalm together as a literary unit. Holman (1971:301) states that this *inclusio* indisputably

points to the unity of the psalm, despite the seemingly irreconcilable tone of verses 19-24. Second, it functions as a headline for what the psalm is all about, namely calling on an all-knowing YHWH to scrutinise and to recognise the psalmist's life.

Merism

As a figure of speech in Hebrew poetry, merisms is typically applied to illustrate large entities by directing the reader's attention to the smaller parts of the larger whole. Psalm 139 is bursting with merisms that is effectively employed to reinforce the underlying theme of the psalm, namely that YHWH is all-knowing, ever-present and almighty. The use of merisms in Psalm 139 illustrates the severity of YHWH's perfect, knowledgeable presence.

In verse 2a a merism is formed between the words **שָׁבַתִּי** (my sit down) and **וּקְוִמִי** (my rise up). This merism implies that YHWH is aware of everything that happens between the time that the psalmist rises in the morning and settles in at night. These temporal expressions used in verse 2 refers to the usual hither and thither of the psalmist within a regular day (Schaefer, 2001:327).

Similarly, the merism in verse 3a emphasises that YHWH knows of every time the psalmist **אָרַח** (wanders) and every time the psalmist **רָבַעַ** (lie down). Once again it is implied that the YHWH knows what happens when the psalmist is at home and what the psalmist does when going about the day.

Whereas verses 2 and 3 express the perfect knowledge of YHWH of the psalmist's every movement, verse 5a conveys the psalmist's feeling of being guarded by the perfect presence of YHWH. From **אֲחֹרַי** (behind) **וּקְדָמַי** (and in front) YHWH surrounds the psalmist. YHWH does not only know of the psalmist's activities and travels, but YHWH is intimately involved in these actions by means of surrounding the psalmist.

When the psalmist points to YHWH's inclusion from **אֲחֹרַי** (behind) and **וּקְדָמַי** (in front), it implies that YHWH surrounds the psalmist.

The merisms formed in verses 8, 9 and 11 should be read and understood against the background of the Ancient Near Eastern cosmology. By stating, in verse 8a and 8b that YHWH will find the psalmist even if the psalmist were to climb up to the שָׁמַיִם (heavens) or if the psalmist retreat into שְׁאוֹל (Sheol/underworld), the author implies a spiritual reality encapsulating the heavenly and underworldly realms. Both of these spiritual realms are occupied by the presence of YHWH and there is no one place to be found where the presence of YHWH is not already there. The merism in verse 9a and 9b, שֶׁחַר (wings of the dawn) and בְּאַחֲרֵית (ends of the sea), respectively conveys the cardinal points East and West, suggesting that there is no space on earth that YHWH does not already occupy. In accordance with the spatial merisms, a temporal merism is also put to use. In verse 11a and 11b חֹשֶׁךְ (darkness) and אֹר (light) signify the course of a day during which YHWH is always at hand.

Tautology

As the saying goes the best possible way to conceal something is to hide it *under the cover of darkness*. In verses 11 and 12 the words חֹשֶׁךְ (darkness) and לַיְלָה (night) is repetitiously arranged to emphasise that even what seems logical to the psalmist is in an utmost way illogical to YHWH, for not even the darkness of the night can conceal anything from YHWH's sight.

Asyndeton

The omission of the conjunction between verse 12b and 12c serves to strengthen the tautology that is woven throughout verses 11 and 12 and thus underlines the fact that nothing can be hidden from YHWH's sight, not even under the cover of darkness.

Metaphor

The phrase כְּנֶפֶי־שֶׁחַר (wings of the dawn) in verse 9a is simultaneously a metaphor for the break of day and the rising of the sun in the East. Scholars provide a wide array

of explanations as to how this metaphor should be understood. Scroggie (1978:48) believes that this phrase refers to the speed of light. Goldingay (2008:632) adopts this thinking by saying that even if one hitches a chariot to the sun and travels with it (on its wings) it will not be fast enough to escape YHWH's presence. Eaton (1967:302) in turn regards this phrase as referring to the angel of the dawn and the speed at which this particular angel travels. According to this standpoint, the psalmist could attempt to fly as fast as the angel of the dawn but YHWH's hand will still be faster and able to grab the psalmist. Thus, not even hitching a ride with the morning angel can provide the psalmist with the opportunity to escape YHWH's omnipresence. Some exegetes who believe that this phrase alludes to mythological insights. Dahood (1970:298), Gunkel (1962:588) and Barnes (1976:293) assume that the phrase refers to a mythological deity that spreads its wings to the heavens.¹⁵¹ Harmon (2007:782) together with Keel (1978:23) supports the notion that the phrase 'wings of the dawn' refer to a geographical place - the East. By using the phrase 'wings of the dawn' instead of just using the word 'East' describes the way the sun rises in the East. Likewise, the phrase **בְּאַחֲרֵי יָם** (in the ends of the sea) in verse 9b, is a metaphor for dusk or rather the setting of the sun in the West.¹⁵²

¹⁵¹ Assuming that the phrase 'wings of the dawn' refers to a mythological deity, Segal (2013:655) suggests that the most famous mythological solar figure in Ancient Near Eastern thought should be taken into account. This mythological figure originated in the Heliopolitan cosmogony of the Egyptian solar cult and is known as Atum-Re. In Egypt, it was believed that Atum-Re travelled through the heavens in his boat. Every morning, the sun was born in the East from the goddess of heaven (Nut). In the late afternoon, when the light of the sun slowly dims in the West, it was believed that Nut swallowed the sun again in order to rebirth it the following morning. With regards to the wings with which dawn arises another Heliopolitan myth should be considered. The Ra-Horakhti myth tells the tale of how Ra (the sun-god) travelled together with his son Horus (the falcon-god). At a time of attack Horus protected his father Ra, and subsequently became the patron of the sun-god. From there on the sun-god and the falcon-god became inseparable, and become known as Ra-Horakhti. The symbol of Ra-Horakhti depicts both the traits of Ra and Horus – a sun disk rising with the wings of an eagle. The Egyptian understanding of the embodiment of the cosmic power of the sun as a god rising every morning with wings from the underworld could be linked to the psalmist's metaphor of the daybreak that rises with wings.

¹⁵² Once again, the possibility arises that the psalmist refers to the well-known Heliopolitan cosmogony. It was believed that the sun-god travelled through the underworld in his boat by means of the so-called cosmic Nile. The cosmic Nile has its origins in the waters surrounding the earth – thus in the sea. So, when the light of Atum-Ra fades in the West, it is believed that the sun-god descended into the sea to start its journey through the underworld by means of the cosmic Nile, in order for it to rise again in the East, the following morning.

Personification

In verse 11a חֹשֶׁךְ (darkness) is personified by awarding it the ability to שׁוֹרֵף (cover). There are divergent opinions about the translation of the word שׁוֹרֵף (cover) that is translated in the NIV with the phrase ‘hide me’.¹⁵³ Kraus (1989:516) in turn suggests that the concept of darkness that covers refers to the manipulation of magic.¹⁵⁴ Consistent with this understanding Psalm 139 suggests that even if forces of power are used to cover the psalmist, it will not be sufficient to hide the psalmist from YHWH. Knight (1983:323) insists that the psalmist tries to demonstrate that YHWH can wield darkness and chaos to a positive end.

Comparison

In verse 12b and 12c the psalmist devotes two separate comparisons to illustrate that even the darkness of the night holds no mystery to YHWH, because to YHWH יָאִיר כִּיּוֹם (the night shines like the day) and כְּחַשְׁמֵיכָה כְּאוֹרָה (darkness is like light). These comparisons serve the purpose of illustrating that not even the darkness can cause YHWH to overlook or neglect anything.

Hyperbole

When the scope of the thoughts of YHWH is pondered by the psalmist, the psalmist deducts that these thoughts are of such magnitude that it is uncountable. The psalmist compares the number of YHWH’s thoughts to מִחֹל (more than sand). This exaggeration serves the purpose of underlining YHWH’s omniscience in comparison to the limited understanding of the human mind.

¹⁵³ The word שׁוֹרֵף only occurs on one other occasions in the Old Testament, namely in Gn. 3:15. Here it is translated with the word ‘crush’ (Prinsloo, 1994:127).

¹⁵⁴ The manipulation of magical powers with reference to darkness that covers something or someone occurs in Gn. 19:11 and 1 Ki. 6:18 (Kraus, 1989:516).

3.9 *Genre and Sitz im Leben*

In the study of Psalm 139, the *genre* of the psalm is a subject of major controversy.¹⁵⁵ This section of the literary analysis of Psalm 139 will give an overview of the different propositions that scholars have made to the *genre* and *Sitz im Leben* of the psalm.

Gunkel's position on the interpretation of psalms through the *genre* classification has dominated research in Psalm 139. Scholars have long been attempting to make sense of psalms utilising form-criticism. To date, the form-critical tradition, stemming from Herman Gunkel, remains the preferred method in dealing with and attempting to understand the great divide that occurs within Psalm 139. According to the form-critical method psalms can only be classified under the same *genres*, provided that they meet the following conditions (Gunkel & Begrich, 1998:15-16):

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

Attempts to meet these well-established criteria, to discern the *genre* of Psalm 139, has thus far culminated in a debate. The reason for the debate is twofold: First of all, Psalm 139 displays a mixed form¹⁵⁶ and second, to date scholars have not been successful in determining the *Sitz im Leben* of Psalm 139 because of a lack of definite historical references in the psalm itself. This makes it nearly impossible for Psalm 139 to be placed within the earliest context of its origins (Toy, 1884:80) and consequently, the *genre* of the psalm remains elusive. Nonetheless, scholars have extensively attempted to, first of all, determine the setting of the psalm, and accordingly, to assign a *genre* to Psalm 139.

¹⁵⁵ Ps. 139 has respectively been classified as: a hymn; an individual complaint; a song of praise for the creation; a song of thanksgiving; a complaint by which innocence is expressed; a psalm of innocence by a religious leader; or a prayer of an innocently accused (Prinsloo, 1994:130).

¹⁵⁶ Mixed form hereby refers to the presence of opposing thoughts, emotions and feelings present in the psalm, resulting in the psalm being classified under more than one of the traditional *genre*-types.

Gunkel originally proposed the *genre* of a hymn (Gunkel & Begrich, 1998:46). He motivated this *genre* classification by stating that the basic mood of a hymn was that of enthusiasm, admiration, reverence, praise and glorification - all characteristics of Psalm 139. A hymn is further coloured by an in-depth reflection on the relationship between the author and YHWH, similar to the reflection found in Psalm 139. However, Gunkel's classification of Psalm 139 seems to be based primarily on the contents of verses 1-18, and thus neglects to take into contemplation verses 19-24 in the determination of the *genre*. This seems to be a recurring theme in the dealings with Psalm 139, to such an extent that Schmidt (1928:26) declares that nobody satisfactorily deals with the burst of anger against the wicked found in verses 19-22. Although the hymnic undertones are unmistakable, if considered as a literary unit without editorial additions, Psalm 139 cannot be spoken of as a hymn in terms of style and shape.

The most common tendency is to accept Psalm 139 as exhibiting a mixed form, where two different *genres* are assigned to two distinct parts of the psalm. In the case of Psalm 139, it is commonly noted that verses 1-18 exhibit the traits of a hymn, while verses 19-24 exhibits the traits of an individual lamentation, according to Vos (2005:203). Allen (2002:323) conversely emphasises that allocating two different *genres* to one psalm will result in one *genre* always being subordinated to the other. Because the *genre* is the starting point from which a psalm must be read and understood, the dominant *genre* impairs the reading of the portion of the text not classified hereunder. According to Allen (1977:8-9) the only sure thing about the *genre* of Psalm 139, is that the constant use of the "I" affirms the fact that this psalm is the prayer of an individual. Besides this straightforward feature, there seems to be no clear indication as to how the psalm was used in worship. Allen further points to verses 19-24 as the climax of the psalm, instead of disregarding it as an addition to the psalm.¹⁵⁷ From this premise verses 1-18 is regarded as preparation of adoration for the complaint that is to follow, and verses 19-24 reads much like an individual's lament by which the psalmist brings a situation of personal distress to YHWH's attention.

¹⁵⁷ Allen, 1977:8.

Mowinckel (1992:75) acknowledges a definite two-part division in Psalm 139. He also admits to the contradictory tones to be found in each of these parts. However, equivalent to Allen, he remains resolute that the parts should not be read and form-critically classified separately. He likens Psalm 139 to that of Psalm 90, wherein the foregoing verses serve a preparatory function. Just as Psalm 90:1-12 reflects on the eternity of YHWH before the psalmist presents the plea of verses 13-17, likewise Psalm 139:1-18 contemplates YHWH's omniscience and omnipresence as a basis for the appeal that is to follow in verses 19-24.¹⁵⁸ Mowinckel argues that the basis of every psalm is an acknowledgement of YHWH's majesty and power.¹⁵⁹ Thus the psalms should not be read as contemplations on YHWH's nature, but rather, one should ask to what situation these properties of YHWH is being affirmed. How does the psalmist use certain enunciations to nudge God to intervene in a particular situation? The consequence of this method of reading is that verses 1-18 should only be read as an emotively filled prologue to the actual prayer that is to follow in verses 19-24. Verses 1-18 serves as a hymnic preparation to the individual lament that is to come in verses 19-24.

Würthwein (1957:167) concedes that opinions on the *genre* of Psalm 139 are largely influenced by the work of Gunkel and his classification of psalms as religious songs sung either during religious services or during private worship sessions. Accordingly, Gunkel's classification is only helpful when there are definite cultic references in the psalms. However, Würthwein argues that there are many psalms, of which Psalm 139 forms part of, that have no cultic references in its content, at all.¹⁶⁰ Based on the extremely personal nature of Psalm 139, and not based on cultic references, Würthwein assumes verses 19-24 to be the core of the psalm. The reason for this assumption being the fact that the psalmist, first of all, exclaims a deeply personal knowledge of YHWH, after which the psalmist shamelessly petitions YHWH's scrutiny. The petition to be scrutinised by YHWH coupled with a definite distancing from wrongdoers, prompts Würthwein to propose the *Sitz im Leben* of Psalm 139 to be a petition for the innocence of a wrongfully accused religious leader – someone with intimate knowledge of YHWH that can stand shamelessly in the presence of the

¹⁵⁸ Mowinckel, 1992:24.

¹⁵⁹ Mowinckel, 1992:23.

¹⁶⁰ Würthwein, 1957:167.

Creator. Westermann (1981:188) builds forth on this theory by explaining that the psalmist is, most probably falsely accused of idolatry and is brought to testify to his/her innocence before the community, the court and YHWH. The protest in verses 19-22 is the psalmist's attempt to convince YHWH to be of help in the psalmist dire predicament, while verses 1-18 simply lays the foundation for an argument of innocence. In verses 1-18 the psalmist appeals to YHWH as the One who ultimately knows the psalmist's every thought and move (Brueggemann & Bellinger, 2014:582). Geller (2002:116-119) attempts to explain the complexity of Psalm 139 through the concept of Torah piety. Following this unique approach, the psalmist's use of the word יִקְרָא (precious/wonderful) refers to the mystery of the creation of the individual. The psalmist, in total submission, acknowledges YHWH's complete familiarity with the individual. Up to verse 17, God's foreknowledge is praised and the predestination of the psalmist is revered, until suddenly the focus is shifted away from YHWH's knowledge of the psalmist, to the psalmist's knowledge of YHWH. It is precisely at this interchange of thoughts that Geller calls attention to Torah piety,¹⁶¹ namely that one's thoughts are completely and utterly absorbed by YHWH and the covenant law. What gives rise to the juxtaposing of thoughts? What prompts the psalmist to parallel YHWH's knowledge of the psalmist with the psalmist's knowledge of YHWH? The answer is: persecution. Being persecuted by the wicked is what gave rise to Psalm 139. However, in approaching YHWH, the psalmist persists in the approach of Torah piety by not asking YHWH for protection against the wicked, but rather by pledging allegiance to YHWH against the enemies of YHWH. While Geller provides a thorough explanation of the unique composition of Psalm 139 through Torah piety, the psalm essentially still represents the petition of an individual, albeit a somewhat creatively conjured petition.

As opposed to those who suggest that verses 19-24 should be determinative of the *genre* of Psalm 139, some insist that the hymnic tone of verses 1-18 should not be disregarded on account of the disruptiveness of verses 19-24. Kraus (1989:512) advises that the psalmist, being victimised by wrongdoers, calls on YHWH to judge the situation and search the psalmist's intent – an element commonly seen in laments. However, Kraus suggests that YHWH's judgement to the psalmist's petition is to be

¹⁶¹ Geller, 2002:118.

found in verses 1-18, in which it is made clear that YHWH has searched and knows the psalmist's motive. To Kraus, the petition-answer model is characteristic, not of an individual lament, but rather of a song of thanksgiving.¹⁶² The reason for this classification is that the situation prompting the petition was already addressed by YHWH inciting the psalmist to praise YHWH for the outcome. Psalm 139 starts with praise for YHWH and concludes with the original petition that eventually gave rise to the praise. Chronologically verses 19-24 should have preceded verses 1-18, but by its unique positioning, the song of thanksgiving becomes a declaration of utmost trust. Some believe that Psalm 139 demonstrates characteristics of wisdom literature. Vos (2005:203) points to the likeness between Psalm 139 and the book of Job, to underline the wisdom motifs in the psalm. Buitenwieser (1938:541-545) goes on to conclude that the author of Job is also responsible for the writing of Psalm 139, thus rendering it a wisdom psalm.¹⁶³ Terrien (1993:68) disagrees with this premise but claims that, although Psalm 139 and Job are unlikely to be products of the same author's pen, it is inevitable that Psalm 139 shows certain intellectual and spiritual connotations that can be traced back to certain wisdom circles. This, according to Terrien (2003:881), renders the literary *genre* of Psalm 139 unique in all of the *Psalter*.

This exposition serves to demonstrate the controversial nature of Psalm 139. There seem to be innumerable recommendations as to what the *genre* of the psalm is, and consequently in the light of what scenario Psalm 139 gets its significance. Through attempts of scholars to cast Psalm 139 into a mould, it becomes intrinsically clear that a form-critical approach is a favoured way of analysing the content and unity of Psalm 139. Furthermore, a form-critical analysis of Psalm 139 is contentious. Scholars who

¹⁶² Kraus, 1989:512.

¹⁶³ Buitenwieser (1938:541-542) notes the similarities in language between Ps. 139 and the book of Job: (1) The rare verb in v. סָכַן (be familiar with) can also be found in Job 22:21. (2) The phrase in v. 5 עָלַי כַּפְּכָה (on me your hand) occurs in Job 9:33 with slight variations. (3) The expression in v. 6 מְגֹנְנִי (for me, knowledge, wonderful) finds its parallel in Job 11:6, and neither of these phrases can be found elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible. (4) The phrase in v. 13 אֶתְּכָנִי (you weaved me) pointing towards the formation of the fetus in the womb of the mother, is paralleled in Job 10:11 and is unique to these two texts. (5) The verb in v. 8 יָצַע (spread out) is derived from the noun יְצוּעַ (bed) which occurs in Job 17:13. (6) The figurative use of the word לַיְלָה (night) in vv. 11-12 can also be found in Job 35:11. (7) The personification of the dawn in v. 9 כַּנְּפֵי־שָׁחַר (on the wings of dawn) occurs twice in the book of Job, namely in Job 3:6 and 38:12-14.

choose to approach Psalm 139 from the perspective of a pre-determined literary form cannot seem to agree on what the *genre* (or multiple *genres*) the psalm consists. Uncertainty of how the unity of Psalm 139 should be read and understood is the consequence of this ambiguity. A form-critical approach lacks in aiding the reader to comprehend how the condemnation of evil oppressors in verses 19-22 must be perceived in the incidence of the realisation of divine presence in verses 1-18 and 23-24.

At this point, a warning that should not be disregarded is that of Black (2012:21) who warns that any attempt to cast Psalm 139 into a pre-determined literary form (or *genre*) without sufficient evidence, is to project meaning into the text, instead of allowing the reader to be moulded by the psalm and the author's original purpose with the creation of the psalm. Tesh & Zorn (2004:477) rightly states that the challenge of placing Psalm 139 within a certain context (or *Sitz im Leben*) to determine the *genre* of the psalm is to figure out how verses 19-24 fits in the greater context of verses 1-18.

3.10 Dating

Since the *Sitz im Leben* could not be determined with certainty there is no clarity about the date of composition of Psalm 139. Among scholars who are willing to venture a guess on the dating of Psalm 139, there seem to be two camps. The first camp prefers a post-exilic date for the composition of Psalm 139, while the second favour a pre-exilic date.

Using linguistic dating, and basing his premise purely on the frequent appearances of Aramaisms in the psalm, Prinsloo (1994:131) assigns Psalm 139 a post-exilic date – a suggestion that finds the support of Anderson (1972:905).¹⁶⁴ Gerstenberger (2001:406) suggests that, based on the strong individualistic character of the psalm, as well as the psalm being too sophisticated to be sung during communal worship, the possibility exists that the psalm was sung by a wise man from an educated circle, to a

¹⁶⁴ The practice of dating Biblical texts of uncertain composition dates by comparing linguistic features to the development phases of Biblical Hebrew, recently came under fire. The value of Aramaisms in linguistic dating are reduced due to the fact that the presence of Aramaisms could be explained by many other factors (Dean, 2016:1101).

public audience, after which the liturgical officiants would direct the worshippers to beg YHWH's inspection of their lives. If this is the case, Gerstenberger concludes that he would also date Psalm 139 to the post-exilic community in Judah or the Diaspora.¹⁶⁵

Amongst scholars petitioning for an earlier date of composition is Dahood (1970:285), suggesting that if indeed Psalm 139 could be linked, through wisdom motifs, to the composition of the book of Job, and if indeed the book of Job can be dated to the seventh century BCE, then it is probable that Psalm 139 would also have a pre-exilic date. Allen (2002:326) advises that the davidic ascription would further stand in support of an earlier date of composition. Vos (2005:206) however maintains that there is nothing in the text of Psalm 139 itself that supports such an early date of composition.

Pointing to the similarities between Psalm 139 and the prophecy of Jeremiah, Terrien (2003:880-881) specifically places the composition of the psalm at about 609-587 BCE, during the last days of the kingdom of Judah, thus also a pre-exilic date. In this light, the wicked of which the psalmist is speaking in verses 19-22 could be regarded as the Babylonians and the Jews who opposed the preaching and prophesy of Jeremiah.

Both pre- and post-exilic dates of composition of Psalm 139 is proposed. One cannot disagree with the assertion of Kraus (1989:513) that the shrewd intertwining of priestly theology, practical application and poetical expertise renders the original date of the psalm undetectable. With the content of Psalm 139 reflecting an apparent calm and trust in the omnipresence of YHWH, one would not be amiss to assume the setting of a threatening situation, in which case both pre-exilic and post-exilic dates would make sense. However, for now, the date of composition of Psalm 139 remains indeterminate.

¹⁶⁵ Gerstenberger, 2001:406.

3.11 Synthesis

The primary focus of chapter 3 was to do a literary analysis of Psalm 139. In this chapter, an exegesis on Psalm 139 was performed to determine what the textual features of the psalm are, as well as discerning the relationship between these characteristics. This literary-exegetical (synchronic) study of the text was done to establish a holistic understanding of Psalm 139.

The superscription of the psalm attributes it to the pen of David and Psalm 139 finds itself firmly nestled within the final davidic *Psalter*, although there seems to be no content specifically linking the psalm to the life of David. The introductory phrase וַתִּדְרֹשׁ: יְהוָה חֲקֵרְתָּנִי (YHWH, you search me and you know me) reveals the theme and content of the whole psalm. This unadorned phrase of a few words seems to open the door to the comprehension of the text in its entirety. With these simple words, the psalmist indisputably states that YHWH is an omniscient, omnipresent and omnipotent God who knows the being of humankind without reservation. This line of thought is repeated in the closing verses to the psalm. In verse 23 the psalmist raises a request וְדַע שְׂרַעֲפָי: חֲקֵרְנִי אֵל וְדַע לִבִּי בְּחֻנֵּי וְדַע שְׂרַעֲפָי: (And you must see if the way of idol is in me, and you must lead me in the way everlasting). With this request, the psalm is brought full circle, from a general observation of YHWH's all-seeing, ever-present abilities, to a request to be seen and searched by YHWH. Throughout the psalm, the author decoratively makes use of poetic techniques to underscore the where, when and how of YHWH's presence. Parallels and chiasms are used in the form of merisms accentuating the fact that YHWH is present throughout the whole of creation and that humankind cannot escape this omnipresence by any means possible.

Psalm 139 reveals a level of intimacy between the author and YHWH that is unbeknownst in the whole of the *Psalter*. This is seen through the important interchanging between the two subjects: YHWH and the psalmist. This exchange accentuates the significance of the relationship between the author and YHWH. Throughout the psalm, the author does not seem uncomfortable with the presence of YHWH. The idea of predestination in verses 15-16 seems to comfort the psalmist to some extent.

Based on my structural analysis, the psalm can respectively be divided into five stanzas and eleven strophes. This does not mean that each of these sections must be handled separately. Each stanza and strophe stand in relation to its preceding and following stanza and strophe. These building blocks from which Psalm 139 is composed are closely linked by the concept that YHWH is ever-present in all spaces and life situations. Even verses 19-22 does not seem unfitting in the light of the present structural analysis. In this stanza that cuts through the psalmist's realisation of divine presence, a plea to the condemnation of evil oppressors is keenly directed towards this perfect knowledge of YHWH. Working within the framework of a theme of an all-knowing, ever-present deity, the great chasm between verses 1-18 and verses 19-24 becomes somewhat smaller.

Though similar in theme, it is in the light of the underlying tones of these separate parts that scholars seem to be at odds. Accordingly, a battle of the form-criticism ensued. It becomes clear that a form-critical approach has been dominant in the research of Psalm 139. However, owing to a lack of historical references in the text, the *Sitz in Leben* of Psalm 139 remains undetected and even though scholars extensively attempted to distinguish the *genre* of the psalm, the mixed underlying tones present in the psalm halts conformity in views. Consequently, a form-critical approach to Psalm 139 lacks in aiding the reader to comprehend how the condemnation of evil oppressors in verses 19-22 must be understood in the light of the realisation of divine presence in verses 1-18 and 23-24. Naturally, the question arises: Should Psalm 139 be read and understood as a compositional whole or rather a redactional ensemble?

It becomes clear that the confusion that exists surrounding the unity, *genre* and significance of Psalm 139 since form-criticism studies the text in isolation. There is a growing emphasis on the fact that psalms cannot be read in isolation, but must always be studied within the relationships in which it stands with surrounding texts. In psalm research, there is a prevailing interest on questions regarding the composition, editorial unity and overall message of the *Psalter* as a literary canonical unit with a specific structure and message. It is thus important to study Psalm 139 within the different relationships and contexts in which it is embedded. As a result, the following

chapter will shed light on the positioning of Psalm 139 in between Psalms 138 and 140.

CHAPTER 4

REDACTIONAL FRAME OF PSALMS 138-140

4.1 Introduction

In chapter 4 focus falls on an inter-textual analysis of Psalm 139. In the preceding chapter, a holistic understanding of the textual nature of Psalm 139 was accomplished through an exegetical (or intra-textual)¹⁶⁶ study through which the characteristics of Psalm 139 was explored. The present chapter builds forth on this knowledge by utilising the comprehension of Psalm 139 to compare it to the two psalms immediately adjacent to it, i.e. the foregoing Psalm 138 as well as the following Psalm 140. To assess the literary relationship that exists between these texts, the textual features and elements of Psalms 138 and 140 are first explored using an exegetical study of the respective texts. Only after exploring characteristics of the texts neighbouring Psalm 139, meaningful suggestions can be made about the content and relationship between these psalms. A literary-exegetical study of Psalms 138 and 140 is followed by an overview of the inter-textual relationship between Psalm 139 and Psalms 138 and 140.

This chapter aims to reflect recent trends in Psalm studies, suggesting that the best possible way to comprehend a single psalm is not to analyse it in isolation, but rather to evaluate the relationships it is joined into. To do this, a critical evaluation of the positioning of Psalm 139 in between Psalms 138 and 140 is done. This trend exposes the cause undertaken by scholars to move away from a form-critical approach to texts,

¹⁶⁶ Prinsloo (2008:52) explains intra-textuality as a reference to the internal relations that exists within a single text. Intra-textuality is contrasted to inter-textuality, which refers to the external relations the relevant text shares with texts outside itself. An intra-textual analysis therefor refers to the exploration of textual features within a single text, whilst an inter-textual analysis refers to the comparison of textual features across different texts. Sutton (2019:19) asserts that a logical order exists between an intra-textual and an inter-textual analysis of a texts. Any text must first be explored on an intra-textual level before it can be studied on an inter-textual level.

in which a psalm is exclusively studied at the hands of its *genre* and *Sitz im Leben*, towards a sharpened focus on the composition of the *Psalter* as a whole.¹⁶⁷

In this chapter, an inter-textual perspective is gained utilising a literary analysis of Psalms 138 and 140 as well as a comparative study between these texts' features and that of Psalm 139. This chapter aims to determine the nature of the textual and theological relationship that exists between Psalm 139 and Psalms 138 and 140. This study endeavours to shed light on the interconnectedness of textual features of Psalms 138-140 on a literary as well as theological level. Similarities, as well as differences between these psalms, is examined and highlighted to answer the question: How does Psalm 139 enter into conversation with its neighbouring texts?

4.2 Psalm 138

4.2.1 Translation

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

Stanza	Strophe	Hebrew text: Psalm 138	Verse	Free translation: Psalm 138
HEADING		לְדָוִד ¹⁶⁸	1a	For David.
I	A	אֹדֶה בְּכָל־לִבִּי	b	I praise you in all my heart; ¹⁶⁹

¹⁶⁷ Wilson (1985:193-197) was one of the original minds to underline inter-textual relationships and the necessity of studying these relationships in order to understand psalms. According to Wilson the so-called seams between the five books of the *Psalter*, are informative to the shaping of the *Psalter* as a coherent unit that tells the story of the people of God. The *Psalter* sets out this story book by book: the first two books of the *Psalter* delineates the rise and establishment of the davidic kingdom; the third book of the *Psalter* tells of the annihilation of the Southern kingdom by means of the destruction of Jerusalem by the Babylonians; the fourth book of the *Psalter* illustrates the confounding event of the Babylonian exile; and finally the fifth book of the *Psalter* colours the release from exile, the return to the land and the re-establishment of the worship of YHWH.

¹⁶⁸ Ps. 138 introduces a completely new and individual unit within Book V of the *Psalter*. This unit consists of Pss. 138-145. Ps. 138 is introduced with the phrase לְדָוִד (for David). This introduction serves as opening to the fourth and final davidic collection in the *Psalter*. Other davidic collections in the *Psalter* includes Pss. 3-41, 51-70 and 108-110.

¹⁶⁹ The vocative "o Lord!" which is usually added to the phrase 'I praise you with all my heart' which in turn results in the general phrasing as seen in the NIV 'I will praise you, Lord, with all my heart' is not

		נָגַד אֱלֹהִים אֲזַמְרֵךְ:	c	In front of gods, I will make music to you.
		אֶל-הַיְכָל קָדְשְׁךָ אֲשַׁתְּחֹוּהָ אֶת-שִׁמְךָ עַל-חַסְדֶּךָ וְאוֹדָהּ	2a	I will bow down towards your holy temple and I will praise your name because of your goodness;
		וְעַל-אֱמֻנָתְךָ	b	and because of your faithfulness; ¹⁷⁰
		כִּי-הִגְדַּלְתָּ עַל-כָּל-שִׁמְךָ אֲמַרְתֶּךָ:	c	for the utterance of your name are exalted above all.
		בַּיּוֹם קָרָאתִי וַתַּעֲנֵנִי	3a	In the day I call and you answered me;
		תָּרַחַבְנִי בְנִפְשֵׁי עֹז:	b	you alarmed me with strength in my soul.
II	B	יִזְרְוּךָ יְהוָה כָּל-מַלְכֵי- אֶרֶץ	4a	They praised you, YHWH, all the kings of the earth; ¹⁷¹
		כִּי שָׁמְעוּ אִמְרֵי-פִיךָ:	b	because they hear words of your mouth.
		וַיִּשְׁירוּ בְּדַרְכֵי יְהוָה	5a	and they sing of the ways of YHWH;
		כִּי גָדוֹל כְּבוֹד יְהוָה:	b	because great is the glory of YHWH.

present in the Masoretic text. It is only in the 11QPs^a that this vocative is seen (Anderson, 1992:901). Other ancient versions of the text (e.g. the LXX) add the proper name יְהוָה (JHWH) to shed light on who the beneficiary of the praise must be (James, 2017:120).

¹⁷⁰ Briggs & Briggs (1969:488) implies that the synonymous couplet ‘...I will praise your name because of your goodness...’ and ‘...because of your faithfulness...’ has been reduced in poetic value to a mere prosaic sentence by a prosaic scribe by which the couplet has lost its effectiveness.

¹⁷¹ Hossfeld & Zenger (2011:526-527) implies that the omission of an address to God in the first three verses of Ps. 138 was done intentionally. When referring to grace bestowed upon the individual, no direct reference is made to YHWH except by means of pronominal suffix 3 m. s. ‘he’ and by means of the word שִׁמְךָ (your name). It is only in v. 4 that the psalmist places the name of YHWH on the lips of earthly kings who are called upon to recognise and acknowledge the provision and tirelessness of the God of Israel.

		כִּי־רָם יְהוָה וְשָׁפַל יִרְאֶה	6a	Because YHWH is exalted and the lowly he sees;
		וְגִבָּה מִמֶּרְחֵק יִידַע:	b	and the haughty from a distance he knows. ¹⁷²
III	C	סֵ־אֵלֶיךָ בְּקִרְבַּ צָּרָה תַּחֲיֵנִי	7a	If I walked in the midst of distress you preserved me;
		עַל אַף אֵיבֵי תִשְׁלַח יָדְךָ	b	because of the anger of my enemies you send your hand;
		וְתוֹשִׁיעֵנִי יְמִינְךָ:	c	and you helped me with your right hand.
		יְהוָה יִגְמַר בְּעַדִּי	8a	YHWH he will complete on behalf of me;
		יְהוָה חֶסֶדְךָ ¹⁷³ לְעוֹלָם	b	YHWH your goodness is for ever;
		מֵעַשֵׂי יָדֶיךָ אֵל־תִּרְךָ:	c	the works of your hands you will not abandon.

4.2.2 Morphological analysis

The following prominent features are present in Psalm 138:

A clear distinction can be made between four persons and/or groups of persons according to the person, gender and number of verbs used, as well as the pronominal suffixes employed in Psalm 138:

¹⁷² V. 6 can also be translated as follows: 'For high is YHWH but he sees the lowly and exalted - yet he perceives from afar'. A reason offered for this translation is that the Masoretes places the revia (masoretic syntactical marker) after וְגִבָּה (and high). The revia thus divides 6b into two correlating and synonymous *stichoi*. Another rationale put forward to explain this translation is that Ps. 138:6 closely relates to Ps. 113:4-6 which refers to YHWH's exaltedness and simultaneously points toward YHWH's omnipresence according to Hossfeld & Zenger (2011:527).

¹⁷³ Ps. 138 is framed by the use of the word חֶסֶדְךָ 'your goodness'. The inclusion formed by pointing out the nature of YHWH also forms the theme of the psalm.

- YHWH
- I/me (the psalmist)
- The kings of the earth
- My enemies (those opposing the psalmist)

i. YHWH

In Psalm 138, the proper noun of choice is: YHWH. Five times the Lord is referred to as “*YHWH*” in verses 4, 5, 6 and 8. It is notable that this chosen form of address only occurs after the third verse.

In the first (vv. 1-3) as well as the third (vv. 7-8) stanza the perfect and imperfect 2nd person male singular is used, for a total of seven times, to refer to the acts of YHWH. In these verses, YHWH is directly addressed by the psalmist. At the end of the third stanza (vv. 4-6) in verse 6, the psalmist changes the rhetoric from a direct address to YHWH, to a third-person point of view. For a brief moment, YHWH is not talked to but talked about. To do this, the psalmist employs the 3rd person male singular: יִרְאֶה (he sees) and יִדְעֶה (he knows). Only once hereafter the psalmist alternates to the third-person in verse 8: יִגְמֹר (he will complete). Allen (2002:312) notes that this type of oscillation between a direct address and a third-person annotation is a common occurrence in songs of thanksgiving.

Throughout the psalm, the pronominal suffix 2nd person male singular has employed a total of fourteen times to refer to YHWH as the object of the psalmist’s praise and admiration.

ii. I/me (the psalmist)

Throughout the psalm, the psalmist is identified and referred to on eight separate instances through the use of the pronominal suffix 1st person singular “my/me”. Phrases such as ‘...I praise you in all my heart...’ and ‘...I call and you answered me...’ colours the psalm with a deeply personal relation of the psalmist to YHWH.

The reliance of the psalmist on YHWH's provision and protection already becomes evident in the first stanza through the continuous use of the imperfect 1st person singular verb. This relationship of dependence is further underscored by the association of the 1st person singular (about YHWH) with the pronominal suffix 2nd person singular male (about the psalmist).

The final stanza reaches a pinnacle in the declaration of the psalmist's affirmation I the imperfect 1st person singular that YHWH will keep watch over the psalmist during situations of distress.

iii. The kings of the earth

At the beginning of the third stanza, a third role-player is referred to by the use of the perfect and imperfect 3rd person common/male plural. Those referred to are the kings of the earth. These so-called kings of the earth only perform three activities: they praise YHWH; they hear the words of YHWH's mouth; and they sing to honour the glory of YHWH. This is a very brief but expressive description of these characters.

iv. My enemies (those opposing the psalmist)

The reference to the enemies of the psalmist occur only in the third stanza, where there is directly referred to them by the participial construct male plural and the pronominal suffix 1st male singular אֹיְבָי (my enemies). In verse 6 a small window is opened through which the reader of Psalm 138 is allowed a peek onto the likes of the so-called enemies of the psalmist. Here the psalmist directly opposes the שָׁפֵל (lowly) and the גָּבִהַּ (haughty/proud) in a protagonist/antagonist capacity. This concise depiction of those opposing the psalmist colours them in the character trait most reviled by YHWH, namely pride. It can be inferred that 'the haughty' is not only the enemies of the psalmist, but of YHWH as well, for even the kings of the earth praise and exalt YHWH, but the proud is only observed and known from a distance. This implies that the haughty fails in joining in the exaltation and adoration of YHWH, thus undermining the Lordship of YHWH and by that means opposing them to YHWH.

v. *Thematic repetition of words*

In Psalm 138 a definite “I-you” relationship can be noted between the psalmist and YHWH.¹⁷⁴ The “you” of this relationship is only identified as YHWH in verse 4.

An *inclusio* is formed by the use of the term **טוֹבָה** (goodness). This word is presented in the same form, namely (Noun cst. m. s. **טוֹבָה** ‘goodness’ + Pns. 2 m. s. ‘you’; ‘your goodness’) in both verses 2 and 8, thus indisputably articulating the theme of Psalm 138 as the goodness of YHWH. Furthermore, the root **יָדָה** (praise) appears in both verses 1, 2 and 4. This repetition emphasises the psalmist’s reaction to the goodness of YHWH. The two roots **טוֹבָה** (goodness) and **יָדָה** (praise) together form the theme of Psalm 138 as a matter of cause and effect – the goodness of YHWH causes the psalmist to burst into praise.

Another important repetition to be noted is the use of the root **יָדָה** (hand) in the final stanza of Psalm 138. In verse 7 the construct female singular form of the word is coupled with the pronominal suffix 2nd male singular. Within the paradigm of verse 7, the hand of YHWH is the hand that ultimately comes to the psalmist’s rescue. The hand of YHWH is sent to the psalmist’s aid during the attack of hostile enemies. It is emphasised that the hand of YHWH protects in the psalmist’s hour of need (Brueggemann & Bellinger, 2014:579). In verse 8 the dual form of the root is once

¹⁷⁴ According to Buitenwieser (1938:687) the “I” addressing the “you” in Ps. 138 is a collective instead of an individual “I”. It is suggested that the psalmist is simply the spokesperson of the shared people of God. The psalmist, as representative of the nation, simply expresses the entire nation’s sentiment. The reason supplied in motivation of this notion is that the second stanza refers to the kings of the earth who takes note of what has happened and this results in their praise of YHWH. Buitenwieser implies that only a major event in the life of the entire people of God would be worth noticing by the kings of the earth. As a result, the “I” in the psalm should not be understood as an individual voicing praise for a personal experience with YHWH, but rather the “I” should be understood as the collective of God’s people giving thanks for an experience of God’s provision on a substantial scale. Anderson (1972:901) defines Ps. 138 as a thanksgiving of the community, and describes the situation from which this thanksgiving arises as liberation from Babylonian exile. In support of this argument Anderson offers Is. 40-66 as point of contact. Kirkpatrick (1912:783) likewise see the psalmist as a representative or speaker of Israel who is expressing the gratitude of the nation after their return from Babylonian exile. Dahood (1970:276) disagrees with the notion that the “I” in Ps. 138 is a communal term. Instead, Dahood asserts that the “I” in Ps. 138 is a person of royal descent – a king who associates himself with the other kings of the earth, but still remains ‘lowly’ or subservient to YHWH.

again coupled with the pronominal suffix 2nd male singular. Here the psalmist classifies the self under YHWH's craftsmanship. Within this *inclusio* the psalmist comes full circle: first, the psalmist is created by the hand of YHWH; second, the psalmist is saved by the hand of YHWH. This *inclusio* serves to underscore YHWH's unrestricted and unconditional fortification of the psalmist when the psalmist is under siege by the wicked. Herein the true goodness of YHWH is exposed.

4.2.3 Syntactical analysis

In this study, preference is given to the Masoretic syntactical analysis.¹⁷⁵ This syntactical study will be carried out by identifying and using Masoretic markers. The distribution of verses and cola serves as an aid to determine the structure of the psalm and to identify the poetic techniques in the psalm. In Psalm 138 the primary dividing disjunctives are: the *Sillûq*, the *'Atnāḥ* and the *'Ôlé weyôred*.

A Masoretic syntactical analysis of Psalm 138:1-8:

Dividing disjunctives		Cola	Line	Vs.	Translation
Dem.	Acc.				
Atn(1)	AzLeg	לְדָוִד אֹדֶה בְּכָל-לִבִּי	1a	1	For David. I praise you in all my heart.
Sil(0)	--	נֶגַד אֱלֹהִים אֲזַמְרֶנּוּ:	b		In front of gods, I will make music to you.
OleW (1)	Zar	אֲשַׁתְּחוּה אֶל-הַיְכָל קִדְשֶׁךָ וְאֹדֶה אֶת-שִׁמְךָ עַל-חַסְדֶּךָ	2a	2	I will bow down towards your holy temple and I will praise your name because of your goodness;
Atn(1)	--	וְעַל-אֱמֻנָתְךָ	b		and because of your faithfulness;

¹⁷⁵ See footnote 113 and 114 for more information on the Masoretic syntactical analysis.

Sil(0)	RebM	כִּי־הִגְדַּלְתָּ עַל־כָּל־שֵׁמֶךָ אִמְרָתְךָ:	c		for the utterance of your name are exalted above all.
Atn(1)	Tip	בַּיּוֹם קָרָאתִי וַתַּעֲנֵנִי	3a	3	In the day I call and you answered me;
Sil(0)	Tip	תָּרַהֲבַנִּי בְּנִפְשֵׁי עֹז:	b		you alarmed me with strength in my soul.
Atn(1)	Tip	יִוְדוּךָ יְהוָה כָּל־מְלֹכֵי־אֶרֶץ	4a	4	They praised you, YHWH, all the kings of the earth;
Sil(0)	RebM	כִּי שָׁמְעוּ אִמְרֵי־פִיךָ:	b		because they hear words of your mouth.
Atn(1)	Tip	וַיִּשִׁירוּ בְּדַרְכֵי יְהוָה	5a	5	and they sing of the ways of YHWH;
Sil(0)	RebM	כִּי גָדוֹל כְּבוֹד יְהוָה:	b		because great is the glory of YHWH.
Atn(1)	Tip	כִּי־רָם יְהוָה וְשַׁפֵּל יִרְאֶה	6a	6	Because YHWH is exalted and the lowly he sees;
Sil(0)	RebM	וְגִבָּה מִמֶּרְחֶק יִידָע:	b		and the haughty from a distance he knows.
OleW (1)	RebQ	אִם־אֶלֶךְ בְּקֶרֶב צָרָה תַּחֲיֵנִי	7a	7	If I walked in the midst of distress you preserved me;
Atn(1)	Tip	עַל־אֵף אֵיבֵי תִשְׁלַח יָדְךָ	b		because of the anger of my enemies you send your hand;
Sil(0)	Tip	וַתוֹשִׁיעַנִי יְמִינְךָ:	c		and you helped me with your right hand.
OleW (1)	Zar	יְהוָה יִגְמַר בְּעַדִּי	8a	8	YHWH he will complete on behalf of me;
Atn(1)		יְהוָה חֶסֶדְךָ לְעוֹלָם	b		YHWH your goodness is forever;

Sil(0)	Tip	מַעֲשֵׂי יָדֶיךָ אֵל-תִּרְדֵּף:	c	the works of your hands you will not abandon.
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4.2.4 Structural analysis and content analysis

4.2.4.1 Introduction

Concerning the structural division of Psalm 138, divergent opinions arise.

Goulder (1998:231) suggests a two-part division of the psalm, in which verses 1-3 and 4-8 are respectively grouped. According to this division of Psalm 138, in the first stanza (vv. 1-3) the אֱמֻנָה (truth) and the חֶסֶד (goodness/faithfulness) of YHWH is praised. This is called the ‘covenanted love’ of YHWH¹⁷⁶ which has been deeply experienced in the deliverance from exile and has given rise to the thanksgiving seen in Psalms 107-118. The second stanza (vv. 4-8) then implies exactly this: an experience of the covenanted love of YHWH that brought the people of God out of exile. The psalmist enthusiastically expresses thankfulness for YHWH’s deliverance, but unfortunately, the psalmist faces another dilemma. The psalmist walks amidst the wrath of enemies. This stanza ends with a declaration of confidence in the goodness of YHWH when the psalmist proclaims complete and utter trust that YHWH will bring to completion what YHWH has started and that YHWH will not abandon the psalmist.

Despite the suggested two-part division of Psalm 138, a three-part division of the psalm is more common and widely recognised. It should, however, be noted that scholars do not agree on where the end of the second stanza and the beginning of the third stanza should be. The verse that usually finds itself lodged in the middle of this tug of war, is verse 6.

One such scholar, opting for a three-part division of Psalm 138 is Dahood (1970:276). The first stanza consists of vv 1-3. In these verses the psalmist, which is presumably a king, voices thankfulness towards YHWH. The reason provided for the psalmist’s gratitude can be found in verse 3: the psalmist called and YHWH answered. Thus, the

¹⁷⁶ See Goulder (1998:233).

psalmist praises YHWH for intervention into a situation of utter distress. The second stanza consists of verses 4-5. Here the psalmist chronicles the reaction of the dignitaries. Even the kings of the earth will see and take note of YHWH's graciousness towards the psalmist and they will join in the praises of YHWH. Note that Dahood (1970:276) groups verse 6 with the third stanza as an introduction to the final line of thought brought forward by the psalmist. Thus, introducing the final stanza, verse 6 reflects upon YHWH's provision. The psalmist declares that YHWH takes note of the seemingly unimportant individuals. Furthermore, the psalmist raises an appeal towards the protection and provision of YHWH in the future.

Anderson (1972:901-904) also supports a three-part structural division of Psalm 138, with the exception of where verse 6 belongs. As per this division of the text verses, 1-3 consists of the praise and the gratitude of the psalmist for aid provided by YHWH; verses 4-6 illustrates the grandeur and mercifulness of YHWH with the conclusion of verse 6 in which the effect of YHWH's providence has on the rulers of the earth; finally, verses 7-8 closes the psalm with an expression of the psalmist's utmost confidence in and reliance on YHWH.

Following this division of Psalm 138, is Allen (2002:314). According to this approximation verses 1-3 can be classified as solely as thanksgiving. This praise arises from the psalmist's subjective encounter with YHWH. Thanksgiving is brought forward from a personal experience with YHWH which served as verification to the psalmist beliefs in an all-powerful deity. Following this bout of thanksgiving, is an exposition of YHWH's praiseworthiness in verses 4-6. The psalmist comes under the impression that a lone song of praise is not sufficient to praise YHWH. The psalmist then proceeds to declare that the monarchs of the earth will join in praise of YHWH if they come to hear what YHWH has done. The psalmist ends the second stanza, ending in verse 6, with an inference of, what Allen (2002:315) calls a general principle of divine magnanimity. The principle of divine magnanimity being that YHWH shows affection for those who subordinate themselves, while YHWH looks on with malicious intent on the behaviour of the proud. Finally, the psalmist concludes with verses 7-8, which constitutes a summary of YHWH's provision and a declaration of faith in this provision for the future.

Weber (2003:339) contributes to the three-part division of Psalm 138 by including that the psalm is poetically arranged in a chiasmic (ABA) structure. The second stanza, which consists of verses 4-6, thus forms the centre of meaning in the text. One of the main reasons these verses are grouped, is how the name of YHWH is employed here. While the first three verses refer to YHWH, it does so without the use of the name of YHWH. It is only from the fourth verse that the name of YHWH is actively employed. It occurs once in verse 4, twice in verse 5 and once more in verse 6. This indicates a logical grouping together of these verses. Furthermore, Weber (2006:339) infers that both the first and the third stanzas are individual thanksgivings. In the first stanza, the psalmist looks back on YHWH's provision and accordingly gives thanks. In the third stanza the psalmist proclaims trust in YHWH's provisions for the future, and already gives thanks for YHWH's goodness that is still to be disclosed. Brueggemann & Bellinger (2014:576-577) also acknowledges the chiasmic structure but emphasises the 'steadfast love' or goodness of YHWH as the framing element that occurs in both the first stanza (vv. 1-3) and the second stanza (vv. 7-8).

DeClaissé-Walford *et al* (2014:958) explain the threefold stanza division of Psalm 138 as demonstrative of the following overarching themes:

Stanza I: In the presence of gods (vv. 1-3)

Stanza II: In the presence of the kings of the earth (vv. 4-6)

Stanza III: In the presence of the enemies (vv. 7-8)

This exposition of Psalm 138 places emphasis on the praise that YHWH is due. YHWH is worthy to be praised in the presence of gods, in the presence of the kings of the earth as well as in the presence of the psalmist's enemies. Praise of YHWH is the unequivocal theme that runs through Psalm 138.

Terrien (2003:869) takes another approach to the structure of Psalm 138. According to this methodology, the psalm should be structurally divided into three stanzas consisting of three bicola each, with an introduction at the beginning and an *envoi*¹⁷⁷ at the end. The introduction to the psalm would be verse 1a: 'To David.' The first stanza

¹⁷⁷ An *envoi* is a final send-off. In the case of Ps. 138, the envoi would be the ultimate and fundamental thought the singer/reader/listener of the psalm has to take to heart.

then commences with verse 1b-2. Here the psalmist asserts his complete and utter veneration of YHWH and no other god. This is followed by stanza 2 (vv. 3-5) in which the psalmist's soul is strengthened to a point where temptations can be weathered. With renewed joy, the psalmist contemplates a time when YHWH will be venerated by monarchs of the world. After this, stanza III (vv. 6-7) follows, in which the supremacy of YHWH is once again affirmed. This omnipotence of YHWH is shown in the way the 'lowly' and the 'haughty' is treated. Finally, Psalm 138 ends with an *envoi* (v. 8). Contrary to scholars who argue that in a three-part division of Psalm 138, verses 4-6 would be the highpoint of the psalm, Terrien (2003:870) considers the culmination of Psalm 138 to be the so-called *envoi*. Here the psalmist pleads for the continuation of the strengthening of the psalmist's soul. The psalm thus culminates in a declaration of dependence on YHWH.

4.2.4.2 Structural analysis of Psalm 138

HEADING: For David. (v.1)

STANZA I: Dedication to praise YHWH. (vv. 1b-3)

STROPHE A: The name of YHWH worthy to be praised. (vv. 1b-2)

STROPHE B: Testimony of deliverance. (v. 3)

STANZA II: Universal praise of YHWH. (vv. 4-6)

STROPHE C: The glory of YHWH universally acknowledged. (vv. 4-5)

STROPHE D: YHWH acquainted with the human condition. (v. 6)

STANZA III: Affirmation of YHWH's goodness. (vv.7-8)

STROPHE E: YHWH protects against enemies. (v. 7)

STROPHE F: Petition for YHWH's continuous fortification. (v. 8)

4.2.4.3 Content analysis of Psalm 138

Heading: For David.

In verse 1a Psalm 138 is opened with the heading לְדָוִד which accredits the psalm to the pen of David. Psalm 138 is one of eight consecutive psalms which open similarly, rendering it the introductory psalm to the final davidic collection in the entire *Psalter*. Confirmation of original davidic composition remains unfeasible. Whybray (1996:35) states that whether this heading signifies a so-called ‘new David’ that can be differentiated from the so-called ‘old David’ is merely speculative and should not be endorsed. The same superscription used to usher in the final davidic *Psalter* is also employed in Book I of the *Psalter*.

Stanza I: Dedication to praise YHWH.

I will praise you! This sentence is a concise description of the content and theme of the first stanza of Psalm 138. This stanza focuses the reader’s attention on the purpose of the composition, namely to יְדָה (praise) YHWH. In this stanza, the praise of YHWH is placed in the mouth of an individual (Dunn & Rogerson, 2003:430). In addition to the psalmist expressing praise, the psalmist adds the phrase בְּכָל-לִבִּי (with all my heart). According to Mays (1999:424), this is an expression that relates to the directive in Deuteronomy 6:5 explicitly stating that God should be loved with one’s entire being.¹⁷⁸

Strophe A: The name of YHWH worthy to be praised.

A unique phenomenon is revealed in the words of verse 1b, when the psalmist discloses the chosen place of worship as נֶגֶד אֱלֹהִים (in front of gods). Although Anderson (1972:902) asserts that worship is never a strictly isolated and confidential matter it seems rather odd to be worshipping YHWH in front of other gods. This statement prompts the reader to consider two possibilities. The first is that YHWH is being praised by the psalmist, in the sanctuary and in the presence of heavenly beings, such as angels that surrounds the throne of

¹⁷⁸ According to Hossfeld & Zenger (2011:528) the closest parallel to these words of the psalmist that can be found in the whole of the *Psalter*, is that of Ps. 9:2a.

YHWH (Weiser, 1962:798). The other possibility is that the psalmist is located in a place other than the sanctuary, most probably in a country in which foreign deities are being worshipped, and from this location worship sprouts from the psalmist's mouth in front of these foreign idols (Anderson, 1972:902).¹⁷⁹ Scholars disagree on the location of the psalmist, and consequently, on the meaning of the phrase "in front of gods". Whether the psalmist stands within the sanctuary or whether the psalmist is located in a foreign country and simply turns towards the location of the sanctuary, the psalmist, with pervasive awareness of the all-encompassing presence of YHWH states that אֲשַׁתְּחִוָּה (I will bow down). While bowing down the psalmist expresses intent to יְרַחֵם (praise) the שֵׁם (name) of YHWH. This praise is born from the חֶסֶד (goodness/faithfulness) and the אֱמֻנָה (faithfulness) that YHWH has revealed to the psalmist (Terrien, 2003:869).

Strophe B: Testimony of deliverance.

The psalmist bears witness to a personal experience with the goodness and faithfulness of YHWH by stating that YHWH עָנָה (answered) the psalmist's call and provided the psalmist with needed support in a time of trial. According to Brueggemann & Bellinger (2014:578), the trial-and-worship phenomenon is customary to Israel's temple worship.¹⁸⁰ However, the possibility exists that the psalmist is not located in the temple and participating in traditional temple worship.¹⁸¹

¹⁷⁹ According to Tucker (2014:126) the psalmist's statement אֲשַׁתְּחִוָּה אֶל-הַיְכָל קִדְשֶׁךָ (I will bow down towards your holy temple) is not unique in the Hebrew Bible, but can be found in 1 Ki. 8:48; Dn. 6:11; Jnh. 2:5 & 8. The possibility should be acknowledged that Ps. 138 was written from a Diaspora background. The content of the psalm sketches a situation of displacement, in which the psalmist is caught under the rule of a foreign kingdom.

¹⁸⁰ Brueggemann & Bellinger (2014:578-579) states that there is a precedent in the temple worship of ancient Israel that a prayer for help is to be followed with thanksgiving and praise. This can be seen throughout all the *Psalter* – songs of praise being offered up when prayers are answered.

¹⁸¹ Ps. 138 follows this so-called blueprint of prayer to YHWH's aid followed by praise for YHWH's assistance, which is unique to temple worship. If, however, the psalmist is not located in the sanctuary, but in a foreign country with foreign idols, Ps. 138 could potentially be a ground-breaking piece of work, as it is an exposé of the praises of YHWH for aid supplied by YHWH in a foreign country. Thus Ps. 138 would acknowledge the presence of YHWH outside the boundaries of the sanctuary, ultimately acknowledging the universal presence of YHWH.

Stanza II: Universal praise of YHWH.

In the first stanza, the one to whom the praises belonged was not named. Now the psalmist offers an answer to this question and leaves no doubt with the reader that the praise of the psalmist is addressed to the only יהוה (YHWH). This stanza makes it clear that the psalmist's praise of YHWH is meant to be heard in front of foreign nations and their monarchs. Goldingay (2008:618) is convinced the spreading of thanksgiving from the psalmist to other people to be a natural progression of events.

Strophe C: The glory of YHWH universally acknowledged

The psalmist moves the focus away from other אֱלֹהִים (gods) to כָּל-מֶלְכֵי-אֲרָץ (all the kings of the earth). The praise and witness of the psalmist for the deliverance YHWH has supplied, is not only directed at the gods of the other nations, but is also aimed at the rulers and subjects of these gods (Brueggemann & Bellinger, 2014:579). Eaton (2003:457) concludes that all the kings of the earth are former foes of YHWH¹⁸² that has come to appreciate the goodness and/or faithfulness of YHWH because of the unconcealed celebration of the psalmist. James (2017:134) states that the progression from a single worshipper's praise to that of the community is typical of the thanksgiving psalms. After all, the aim of thanksgiving is making the glory of YHWH public and universally known.

Strophe D: YHWH acquainted with human condition.

The divine transcendence of YHWH, which gave rise to the combined praise of the psalmist and the kings of the earth in front of foreign deities, is outlined and described in verse 6. According to the psalmist the כְּבוֹד (glory) of YHWH can be seen in the way YHWH treats וְשֹׁפֵל (the lowly) and the גְּבוֹהַ (haughty). According to Tucker (2014:128), the psalmist defies imperial theology by challenging not only the deities of other nations but also by questioning the dominance of kings. The psalmist accomplishes this by stating that YHWH is intimately acquainted with the human condition and that YHWH chose to

¹⁸² This reference is taken from Pss. 2:2 and 48:4.

elevate the humble and chasten the proud. In this ability the praiseworthiness of the divine transcendence of YHWH becomes evident.

Stanza III: Affirmation of YHWH's goodness.

The psalmist doubles up in a grand finale to affirm the goodness of YHWH. The psalmist closes this celebration of YHWH first with an affirmation of trust, followed by a prayer for fortification in future endeavours. Keck et al. (1996:1233) call this the fundamental ambiguity of Psalm 138, e.g. to concurrently acknowledge YHWH's liberation, while praying for YHWH's liberation.

Strophe E: YHWH protects against enemies.

A crisis is averted. The psalmist enjoys YHWH's deliverance and preservation. In the light of the evidence of YHWH's deliverance in the past, the psalmist can now walk confidently through any distressing situation with the knowledge that YHWH's יָד (hand) or יְמִינֶיךָ (right hand) will continue to provide guidance and protection.¹⁸³ Brueggemann & Bellinger (2014:579) asserts that the divine hand/right hand is an assurance policy. If the hand/right hand of YHWH is in favour of the psalmist, then the psalmist's אֹיִב (enemies) will not be able to stand against the psalmist.

Strophe F: Petition for YHWH's continuous fortification.

The psalmist's conclusion to this song of praise gives the reader a hint to the fact that the psalmist is not yet exempt from enemies' assaults, and that danger still ominously lurks in the background. However, the psalmist proclaims trust in YHWH by exclaiming that YHWH will not abandon the מְעֹשֵׂה יָדֶיךָ (work of your hands). The psalmist finds calm in the knowledge that even though trouble persists, YHWH's assistance will also persevere. Here, the goodness of YHWH comes full circle: First it is the goodness of YHWH that delivers the psalmist from impending doom, now, amid unremitting attacks of enemies, the psalmist optimistically clings to the expectation that YHWH will continue to reiterate

¹⁸³ According to Williams (1989:480) the יָד (hand) and יְמִינֶיךָ (right hand) of YHWH refers to YHWH's power and authority. This can be related to Ex. 15:6.

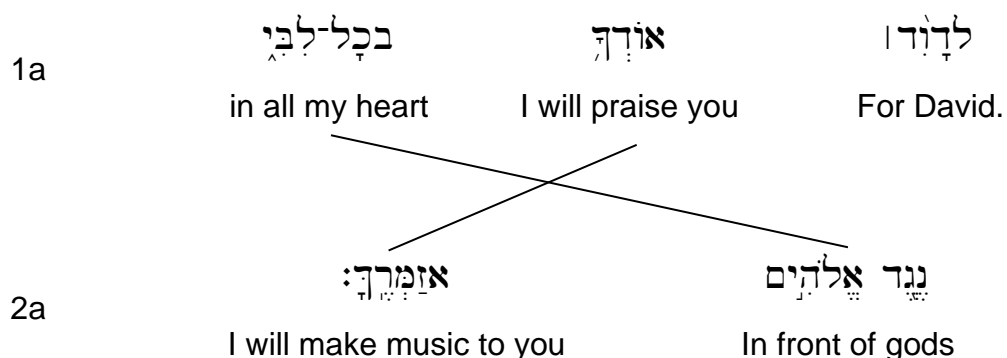
goodness. So strong is the psalmist's conviction of YHWH's goodness, that the psalmist uses the phrase **לְעוֹלָם** (eternal) as descriptive of this attribute of YHWH. Based on YHWH's never-ending goodness, the psalmist petitions to YHWH for fortification

4.2.5 Poetic analysis

In this section, selected poetic techniques of Psalm 138 are discussed:

Psalm 138 consists of an irregular meter.¹⁸⁴ A noteworthy poetic technique skillfully employed by the psalmist is the *inclusio* formed between verses 2a and 8b. An embracing effect is created by respectively using the word **חֶסֶדְךָ** (your goodness/faithfulness) in the beginning and end of the psalm. As stated by Weber (2003:339) the chiastic structure of Psalm 138 (which takes on the ABA-form) repetitively focusses on the goodness of YHWH. This poetic technique is creatively employed by the psalmist to fashion a framework within which the content of the psalm is positioned. The audience of the psalm is unable to read/hear/sing the subject of the psalm, without deliberating on the goodness of YHWH. The psalmist thus creatively ensured that the theme of the psalm is obvious and upfront.

In the introductory verse of Psalm 138, the author creatively employs a syllabic chiasm to underline the commitment the psalmist has toward YHWH.



¹⁸⁴ According to Allen (2003:310) the meter of Ps. 138 is: 3+3, 3+2+2, 2+2, 3+3, 4+3, 3+3, 4+3, 3+3, 2+2, and 3+3+3. Terrien (2003:869) describes this meter as irregular but nonetheless, lyrical.

Twice the psalmist states the resolve to glorify YHWH. First, the psalmist promises praise, and second, the psalmist promises praise in the form of music. Both these phrases consist of a verb and suffix combination. In verse 1a the verb and suffix are followed by a prepositional phrase **אִלֵּי** (in all my heart). This prepositional phrase underlines the acuteness of the psalmist's commitment. The psalmist resolves to praise YHWH with all his/her heart. According to Longman, Ryken & Wilhoit (1998:368), the heart refers to the psalmist's emotions, desire and will.¹⁸⁵ With this, the psalmist declares total and utter commitment, with emotions, desire and will, to glorify YHWH in whatever possible way. Due to the chiasmic structure, verse 2b leads with a prepositional clause that defines the parameters of the psalmist's music-making to YHWH. The psalmist commits to make music to YHWH **בְּפָנֵי אֱלֹהִים** (in front of gods). Whereas the first prepositional clause defined the acuteness of the psalmist's commitment, the second defines the extremity of the psalmist's commitment. The psalmist will no longer hide the praise that YHWH is due and consequently, the psalmist commits to praising YHWH even if it is in the presence of foreign deities. The acuteness of the psalmist's commitment is revealed in the pledge to praise YHWH with all of the heart, while the extremity of the psalmist's commitment is revealed in the resolve to praise YHWH in the territory of foreign gods. This chiasmic structure simultaneously serves as an introduction to the content that is to follow and reveal the theme of the psalm.

In stanza II a cluster of poetic devices can be found, making this the focal point of the psalm. By crowding the central stanza with poetic devices, the psalmist deliberately focuses the readers' attention on the content of this stanza. In the second stanza, the proper noun **יְהוָה** (YHWH) appears for the first time. Hereafter, it is repeated four times within the boundaries of the second stanza, in verses 4a, 5a, 5b and 6a. This repetition serves as an indicator of the object of the psalm. Only in the second stanza, it becomes clear that all subject matter of Psalm 138 – the thankful praise as well as

¹⁸⁵ According to Goodwin (1881:67-68) the word **לֵב** (heart) is respectively translated with the broad concepts of 'mind' or 'soul'. Therefore, **לֵב** can be understood as the origins of thoughts or as the harbourer of the essence of mankind. One should, however, not disregard the wisdom motif attached to this concept. Thus, the heart, in whichever capacity it is employed, remains the seat of comprehension.

the prayer to the preservation of the psalmist – is addressed to YHWH. In this stanza, YHWH becomes the provider and champion of the psalmist. The repetition of YHWH's name serves to point the reader in the direction of the psalmist's praise. Yet another repetition that is noted in the second stanza is the repetition of the conjunction כִּי (because) in verses 4b, 5b and 6a. By the use of this conjunction, the three verses that constitute the second and central stanza of Psalm 138, namely verses 4-6, are bound together in a coherent unit. The conjunction כִּי (because) is explanatory. Thus, the second stanza serves as an elucidation to why YHWH is deserving of the praise that is afforded to YHWH by the monarchs of the earth.

A very interesting poetic technique occurs in verse 4. The psalmist skilfully utilises the hyperbolic phrase כָּל-מֶלֶךְ-כִּי-אָרֶץ (all the kings of the earth). Throughout the *Psalter*, either 'all the people' or 'all the nations' are called to YHWH's praise.¹⁸⁶ It is unique for the psalmist to not call on all the nations, but rather on all the rulers of these nations to join in YHWH's worship. Goldingay (2008:622) suggests that this hyperbole only occurs in one other place in the *Psalter*,¹⁸⁷ and serves to demonstrate that there is no one in heaven (gods) or on earth (all the kings of the earth) that can compare in stature to YHWH. The vocation of all the kings of the earth is to rule similarly as YHWH's rule over all of creation. By stating that all the kings of the earth will join in YHWH's praise, the psalmist colours these ruling monarchs as submissive to how YHWH rules, as described in verse 6.

The parallelism in verse 6a and verse 6b. generates an antithesis between YHWH's stationing towards two differing groups. YHWH's supremacy gives rise to YHWH's intimate familiarity with the ways of both the 'lowly' and the 'haughty', the meek and the pompous. Allen (2002:315) describes this parallel as a "*general principle of divine magnanimity*." The psalmist has discovered a certain differentiating ethic in the way YHWH deals with mankind: YHWH shows affect for those who wilfully submit to YHWH's supremacy, while in the same breath YHWH remains impervious to those who remain obstinate. YHWH's relationship with the 'lowly' is described with the word

¹⁸⁶ Cf. Pss. 33:8; 67:2,3; 72:11,17; 82:8; 96:3; 117:1.

¹⁸⁷ Cf. Pss. 102:15

רָאָה (see), which suggests an intimate familiarity between YHWH and the ‘lowly’ (or humble, poor, deprived, modest).¹⁸⁸ In dissimilarity to this personal acquaintance that YHWH has with the lowly, stands YHWH’s vague familiarity with the haughty. The vagueness of YHWH’s knowledge of the haughty is captured by the use of the phrase מִזֶּמֶר־תֵּק (from a distance).¹⁸⁹ This phrase suggests that YHWH has a far less personal association with the self-righteous. Goldingay (2008:620) suggests an interesting interpretation of the parallelism in verse 6, stating that even though YHWH is exalted, YHWH still chooses to dwell with the humble in spirit. This parallelism serves as a call to those who are feared and revered on earth, such as the monarchs of the nations, to humble themselves if they wish to be as intimately acquainted with YHWH as the psalmist seems to be.

Furthermore, a *merism* is formed in verse 6a and verse 6b. The terms וְשֹׁפְלִים (the lowly) and וְגִבּוֹרִים (the haughty) are poetically employed by the psalmist to summarise the full extent of human existence. These two extremes incorporate the complete scale of the human condition, ranging from those complete down to earth to those who are ravaged by arrogance and self-entitlement. The *merism* serves to underline that not the humble, nor the proud, are hidden from the omnipresence of YHWH. What differs is not the fact that every human being is known by an omniscient God, what differs is the intimacy of the knowledge.

The aforementioned poetic devices expose the theme of Psalm 138 as: Praise for the goodness of YHWH. The psalmist intentionally praises YHWH, in front of foreign deities, while simultaneously encouraging monarchs of foreign nations to join in the psalmist’s avowals of divine righteousness. The motivation for the psalmist’s commendation is revealed in the parallelism/merism in verse 6, in which YHWH’s familiarity with the psalmist is contrasted to YHWH’s vague awareness of those who consider themselves important, such as rulers and emperors.

¹⁸⁸ Anderson (1972:903) suggests the following translation of the text: ‘The Lord is high; he regards the lowly; the haughty he knows from afar’ – a translation that suggests a personal acquaintance with the ‘lowly’.

¹⁸⁹ In Isaiah 2:12-15 both the terms ‘high’ and ‘lofty’ (or ‘haughty’) are used to describe pride or arrogance that needs to be put down (Goldingay, 2008:620).

4.2.6 *Genre and Sitz im Leben*

Psalm 138 is most commonly ascribed the *genre* classification of a song of thanksgiving. Mays (1999:424) attributes this *genre* classification to the opening line of the psalm: “*I will praise you Lord...*” which constitutes the basic sentence of this *genre*.

The description of an individual thank-offering song, as portrayed by Gunkel (1969:17-18), is a song in which a person offers praise for being saved from a distressing situation. To showcase gratitude, this person will bow toward the temple, for it is the so-called dwelling of the divine presence. Within the body of an individual thank-offering song description of the author’s most recent trials is presented, in the following order: First, the cause of the complainant’s distress; second, a call to YHWH to come to the complainant’s aid; third, YHWH’s action in reaction to the complainant’s prayers.

According to Allen (2002:312), Psalm 138 mostly fits the description of the characteristics of this *genre*. Verses 1-2 gives a clear declaration of the psalmist’s resolve to praise YHWH, while verse 3 gives a short account of YHWH’s deliverance. In verses 4-6 the kings of the earth are urged to join in the psalmist’s praises and in verses 7-8 the psalmist affirms confidence in YHWH’s continual support and liberation. Brueggemann & Bellinger (2014:578) suggests that there are verbs that are characteristic of a psalm of thanksgiving in the *Psalter*, including: יָדָה (praise) and כָּוָה (to bow down). Both these verbs are present in the introduction of the psalm and thus serves as further confirmation for the thanksgiving-*genre*.

Mowinckel (1992:29), in support of this *genre* classification, proposes a possible *Sitz im Leben*: a monarch that is saved from enemies that nearly subjugated him. This presumed victory places the king in a strong position among other nations and their rulers and subsequently gives the king in question a platform to openly praise YHWH and give thanks for his deliverance. This king then summons his opposition, which includes not only the gods of these opposing nations but also their leaders, to acknowledge the goodness of YHWH. They are beckoned to join the king in praising

his divine deliverer.¹⁹⁰ This proposed *Sitz im Leben* prescribes the *genre* of Psalm 138 as a specifically royal song of thanksgiving. Dahood (1970:277) supports this suggestion by stating that the king must have been on a military expedition outside the boundaries of Jerusalem, and is consequently prompted to bow towards the temple. For if the king was in Jerusalem, he would most certainly go to the temple, and not simply pray towards it. Weiser (1962:798) suggests that it cannot be inferred from the content of the psalm that Psalm 138 is the thanksgiving song of a king that narrowly escaped an attack of his enemies. According to Weiser verse 6 suggests that the psalmist was only a regular member of society for the psalmist associates with the 'lowly' and not with the 'haughty'.

Hossfeld & Zenger (2011:528) argues against this *genre* description claiming that it is not entirely fitting to brand Psalm 138 as an individual song of thanksgiving. This observation is made based on three primary elements that are always present in a psalm categorised under the thanksgiving-*genre*: first, there is a self-admonition to praise YHWH; second, there is a description of the rescue that took place; third, there is a call on the rest of the audience to join in these praises. Of these three typical elements present in a song of thanksgiving, Psalm 138 is only compliant to the first and the last. Nowhere in Psalm 138 a clear indication is given of the rescue that gave rise to the thanksgiving. No description is given of the צָרָה (distress) and the אִיְבֵי אֹיְבֵי (anger of my enemies) experienced by the psalmist. Hossfeld & Zenger (2011:528) suggests that the closing verses to the psalm read like a prayer of lament. Brown (2010:54) posts a counter-argument asserting that the psalmist's remembrance in verses 7-8 of the distress faced amid the anger of enemies should not be viewed as a separate characteristic of a different *genre*. Instead, it should be interpreted as a very brief account of the psalmist's narrow escape from danger and consequently the reason for the psalmist's thanksgiving to YHWH. Brueggemann (1988:96-97) adds that even though Psalm 138 is not clear on the details, from the psalmist's choice of words it is undeniable that there was an ordeal that was conquered with the help of YHWH. The reader may not be clear on the details, but the psalmist surely knows the details of the deliverance.

¹⁹⁰ Mowinckel (1992:29) relates Ps. 138 to the basic thought process and framework as that of Ps. 18.

Even though the psalmist's distress is not explicitly stated in the psalm, it is possible to postulate a situation of oppression from verse 6. From the parallelism applied in verse 6, a situation unfolded in which YHWH purposefully sided with the meek, instead of siding with the powerful. The audience of the psalmist's thanksgiving is supportive to this point. The psalmist calls the attention of gods and kings - the most powerful entities in the spiritual as well as the physical spheres – as witnesses to the fact that YHWH favours, not the strong and appointed, but rather the weak and dismissed. To this point, the observation of Hossfeld & Zenger (2011:531-532) should be added. According to this observation, Psalm 138 serves as the succession to Psalms 135-137. The introduction of Psalm 138 echoes the content of Psalms 135-137. There is, however, a noteworthy difference in the content of Psalm 138 and Psalms 135-137 that, if noted, unlocks a better understanding of the *genre* of Psalm 138. The difference between Psalm 138 and Psalms 135-137 is their use of the word שִׁיר (sing). In Psalm 137:4-5 exiles are forced to sing a song for their captors (enemies). In Psalm 138:5 the roles are reversed and now the enemies are forced to join in the singing of YHWH's praises. Spoken in terms of *genre*, Psalm 135-137 ends with an imprecatory psalm and Psalm 138 counters this expletive with the utmost gratitude.

DeClaissé-Walford *et al* (2014:958) classify Psalm 138 as an individual hymn of thanksgiving, implying that certain hymnic elements are discernible in the psalm. Terrien (2003:871) calls Psalm 138 a hymn of gratitude. DeClaissé-Walford (2004:21-22) describes this *genre* as a song addressed to YHWH, similar to that of a communal hymn. The difference between these two *genres* is the fact that in an individual hymn of thanksgiving only one voice is present singing the praise of YHWH for deliverance from a life-threatening situation. A simple guide to distinguish these psalms in the Psalter is provided: first there is an introduction in which the psalmist pronounces intent to give praise to YHWH (vv. 1, 2, 4, 5); this is followed by a narrative in which the psalmist explains what prompted this praise (v. 3) and finally a conclusion ensues in which the psalmist actively proceeds to praise YHWH (vv. 2b, 4b, 5b, 6-8).

Conclusively, a song/hymn of thanksgiving seems to be the appropriate *genre* identification for Psalm 138 that clearly states gratitude towards YHWH and calls on others to join in this thankfulness. However, the *Sitz im Leben* seems to be unclear, it

can be argued, to an extent, that the psalm was born out of an ordeal of some sorts, that was overcome by the psalmist, with the assistance of YHWH.

4.2.7 Dating and authorship

A date of composition for Psalm 138 evades scholars due to a lack of clear indicators to the time of composition and authorship in the text. Terrien (2008:871) states that the mention of the temple is no indicator of a certain period, for it could either suggest Solomon's temple or it could point towards the second sanctuary that was built in Persian times, thus making the date of composition as widespread either a pre- or a post-exilic date.

Phillips (1988:583-584) takes the superscription לְדָוִד (For [to] David) to imply literal davidic authorship and suggests that David envisioned YHWH in a heavenly, not an earthly, sanctuary. Mowinckel (1992:29) suggests that the reader comes face to face with a song uttered by royalty. Weiser (1962:798) however disagrees, and postulates, based on verse 6, that the psalmist is only a regular member of the cult community and not by any means royal.

A lack of historical references in the psalm, coupled with a failure to establish an author and a concrete *Sitz im Leben*, results in the inability to place the composition of Psalm 138 within the boundaries of a fixed date of origins.

4.3 Psalm 140

4.3.1 Translation

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

Stanza	Strophe	Hebrew text: Psalm 140	Verse	Free translation: Psalm 140
HEADING		לְמַנְצֵחַ מְזֻמָּר לְדָוִד:	1a	For the supervisor. A psalm for David.
I	A	חַלְצֵנִי יְהוָה מֵאֲדָם ¹⁹¹ רָע	2a	Save me, YHWH, from evil man; ¹⁹²
		מֵאִישׁ חֲמָסִים תִּנְצְרֵנִי:	b	from man of violence, you guard me.
		אֲשֶׁר חָשְׁבוּ רָעוֹת בְּלִבָּם	3a	Those who think evil in their heart; ¹⁹³
		כָּל־יּוֹם יִגְדְּרוּ מִלְחָמוֹת:	b	all of the day they stir up war.
		שִׁנְנוּ לְשׁוֹנָם כְּמוֹ־נָחַשׁ	4a	They sharpen their tongue like a snake; ¹⁹⁴
		חֲמַת עֵכָשׁוּב	b	the poison of a viper
		תַּחַת שְׂפָתֵימוֹ סֵלָה:	c	is under their lips. Selah! ¹⁹⁵

¹⁹¹ Throughout the Hebrew text the psalmist alternates between two terms to refer to 'man', they are: אָדָם and אִישׁ. Since the verbs that directly follows these terms are in the plural form, it can be inferred that the singular forms of אָדָם and אִישׁ are used as collective terms that refers to the same group of people (Terrien, 2003:883). It is unlikely that these alternating terms refers to two differing types of adversaries. Kirkpatrick (1912:793) suggests that both words may be collective, but there is a possibility that the latter, i.e. אִישׁ refers to an individual as the leader of these treacherous men.

¹⁹² The cry of the psalmist in v. 2 to be saved from wicked men is echoed in v. 5. With this repetition the psalmist underlines the purpose of the psalm, and consequently the theme of the psalm. Mays (1999:430) maintains that vv. 2 and 5 sketches the general situation in which the psalmist is found.

¹⁹³ The psalmist makes reference to a total of seven body parts: לֵב (heart) in v. 3; לְשׁוֹן (tongue) in v. 4 and 12; שִׁפָּה (lip) in vv. 4 and 10; יָד (hand) in v. 5; פֶּעַם (foot) in v. 5; רֹאשׁ (head) in v. 8 and 10; פָּנֶה (face) in v. 14. This elaborate use of anatomical terms serves to personalise the psalm to the reader.

¹⁹⁴ The violence experienced by the psalmist is associated with the לְשׁוֹן (tongue) and the חֲמַת עֵכָשׁוּב (poison of a viper) in v. 4. Furthermore, in v. 12 the psalmist directs a plea to YHWH to keep the לְשׁוֹן אִישׁ (men of the tongue) from being established on earth. This implies that the attack on the psalmist is verbal in nature for it is directly related to the tongue. The comparison drawn between the attacks of the psalmist's enemies to the actions of that of wild animals, points towards the extreme terror and crisis in which the psalmist is caught (Terrien, 2003:884).

¹⁹⁵ The meaning of the word סֵלָה (Selah!) in the *Psalter* remains vague. Of all the psalms that is attributed to the pen of David, סֵלָה (Selah!) occurs in only twenty of them, including: Pss. 3, 4, 7, 9, 20, 21, 24, 32, 39, 52, 54, 55, 57, 59, 60, 61, 62, 68, 140 and 143. The fact that "Selah!" only occurs in about a third of the davidic psalms suggests that it is not a latter editorial edition. Briggs (1899:137)

B	שָׁמְרֵנִי יְהוָה מִיַּד רָשָׁע	5a	Keep me, YHWH, from the hands of the wicked;	
	מֵאִישׁ חַמְסִים תִּנְצְרֵנִי	b	from man of violence you guard me,	
	אֲשֶׁר חָשְׁבוּ לְדַחֹת פְּעָמַי:	c	from those who think to push my feet.	
	טָמְנוּ-גֵאִים פֶּחַ לִי וְחַבְלִים	6a	They hide, the haughty, a trap for me and cords;	
	פָּרְשׁוּ רֶשֶׁת לַיַּד-מִעַגְל	b	they spread out a net to the side of the path;	
	מִקְשִׁים שִׁתּוּ-לִי סֵלָה:	c	traps they lay for me. Selah!	
II	C	אָמַרְתִּי לַיהוָה אֱלֹהֵי אֲתָה	7a	I say to YHWH: 'You are my God!
		יְהוָה קוֹל תִּחְנֹנְנִי: הַאֲזִינָה	b	You must listen YHWH, to the voice of my supplication!
		יְהוָה אֱדַנִּי עֵז יְשׁוּעָתִי ¹⁹⁶	8a	YHWH, Lord, power of my salvation,
		סִכַּתָּה לְרֹאשִׁי בְּיוֹם נֶשֶׁק:	b	you cover my head in the day of battle.
		לֹא תַתֵּן יְהוָה מֵאַוִּי רָשָׁע אֵל	9a	Not you gave, YHWH, the desires of the wicked;

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

¹⁹⁶ The phrase עֵז יְשׁוּעָתִי (power of my salvation) is unique in the entire Old Testament. Anderson (1992:915) translates it as “*the strength of my salvation*” while the NIV presents it as “*my strong deliverer*.” The phrase implies that YHWH is the strength or power that delivers the distressed individual.

		זָמְמוּ אֶל־תִּפְק יְרוֹמוּ סֵלָה:	b	his plans not you granted, or they boasted. Selah!
	D	רֹאשׁ מְסָבִי	10a	The head of those surrounding me,
		(יְכַסּוּמוּ) [יְכַסּוּמוּ]: שִׁפְתֵימוּ	b	may the trouble of their lips, cover them.
		(יְמִיטוּ) [יְמִיטוּ] עֲלֵיהֶם גְּחָלִים	11a	Let them be shaken on them, coals
		בְּאֵשׁ יִפְּלוּ	b	of the fire fall on them;
		בְּמַהְמָרוֹת ¹⁹⁷ בְּלִיקוּמוּ:	c	in the water pits not they will rise up. ¹⁹⁸
		אִישׁ לְשׁוֹן בְּלִיקוֹן בְּאָרֶץ	12a	Let man of tongue not he be established on the earth;
		אִישׁ־חֲמָס רָע	b	man of violence, evil
		יְצוּדְנוּ לְמִדְחַפֶּת:	c	they hunt him for power. ¹⁹⁹
III	E	(יָדַעַת) [יָדַעַתִּין] כִּי־יַעֲשֶׂה יְהוָה דִּין עָנִי	13a	I know he does, YHWH, the lawsuit of the humble,
		מִשְׁפַּט אֲבִינִים:	b	the judgement of the poor. ²⁰⁰

¹⁹⁷ The phrase *בְּמַהְמָרוֹת* is a *hapax legomenon* but is found in Ugaritic text where it is translated with 'watery depths' (Goulder, 1998:254). According to Briggs & Briggs (1969:505) the *מַהְמָר* (water pits) should be understood as the pit in Sheol where the enemies of YHWH is cast.

¹⁹⁸ Cf. Pss. 9:18 and 88:11.

¹⁹⁹ It is emphasised that violence is strongly opposed and deeply hated by YHWH (as is evident by Ps. 11:5). The reason for this opposition and hatred of violence is because violence is a means of oppressing the poor, weak and vulnerable (Cf. Ps. 35:11). According to Wenham (2012:111) the violence in Ps. 140 serves the same evil purpose – to gain power by oppressing the already weak. The phrase *יְצוּדְנוּ לְמִדְחַפֶּת* (they hunt for power) in v. 12 reminds of the phrase *תִּשְׂא שִׁמְעֵ שׁוֹא* (they raise false reports) in Ex. 23:1 as well as the phrase *עֵד־חֲמָס* (witnesses of violence) in Dt. 19:16. All these designations suggests people who connive to manipulate the course of justice by bearing false witness and inflicting violence on others.

²⁰⁰ Mays (1999:430) suggests that the basic theology of Psalm 140 is summed up in the words of v. 13. Within this context YHWH is considered the judge over all creation siding with the poor and the humble

		אֵךְ צְדִיקִים יִדְּוּ לְשִׁמְךָ	14a	Surely the righteous they praise your name;
		יֵשְׁבוּ יְשָׁרִים אֶת־פְּנֶיךָ:	b	they sit, the just, before your face.

4.3.2 Morphological analysis

The following prominent features are present in Psalm 140:

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

- YHWH (also called El or Lord)
- I/me (the psalmist)
- The wicked / man of violence (those opposing the psalmist)

i. YHWH (also called El or Lord)

The preferred proper noun, used in Psalm 140 is יהוה (YHWH) and is used in verses 2, 5, 7, 8, 9 and 13. The psalmist also uses two other proper nouns: אֱלֹ (God) in verse 7 and אֲדֹנָי (Lord) in verse 8. Where YHWH seems to be the more frequently used proper noun in the *Psalter*, the latter two proper nouns represent somewhat of a more personal and intimate relationship. אֱלֹ (God) is used in conjunction with the pronominal suffix 1st person singular ‘me/my’ rendering the term אֱלֹי (my God) a very personal designation. This suggests a measure of intimacy between the psalmist and YHWH.

Five times the actions of YHWH are attested to with the perfect and imperfect 2nd person male singular. Simultaneously, the psalmist petitions YHWH’s aid by using the

whilst opposing the violence of the haughty. Consequently, the righteous is responsible for upholding the honour and praise of YHWH.

imperative male singular. The petitions directed to YHWH is first to save the psalmist (v. 2), second to keep the psalmist from the hands of the wicked (v. 5) and finally to comply with the psalmist's request (v. 7). In the final verse, verse 14, the pronominal suffix 2nd person male singular is utilised twice about YHWH as the object of praise of the righteous.

ii. I/me (the psalmist)

All through Psalm 140 the psalmist refers to him-/herself through the pronominal suffix 1st person singular "me/my". This suffix accompanies either a perfect/imperfect or an imperative verb. It either describes or petitions YHWH's faithfulness to the psalmist in such phrases.

Only twice the psalmist's actions are described by the use of verbs in the perfect 1st person singular form. The first occurrence of such a verb is in verse 7 and it is used to postulate a direct voicing of the psalmist's petition towards YHWH. The second occurrence can be noted in verse 13 where it is used to affirm the psalmist's trust in the faithfulness of YHWH. The perfect 1st person singular of the verb יָדַע (know) construes that the psalmist is confident that YHWH will side with the humble and the wrongfully persecuted.

iii. The wicked / man of violence (those opposing the psalmist)

In Psalm 140 there is a strong sense of opposition. The psalmist tends to be very graphic in the descriptions of those who stand in opposition to the psalmist. The preferred term for the psalmist's rivals is אִישׁ־חַמְסִים (man of violence). This term respectively occurs in verse 2, 5 and 12. Apart from this term, other phrasings used to describe the antagonists of Psalm 140 include: רָעָם אָדָם (evil man) in verse 2 and רָשָׁע (wicked) in verse 5 and 9. The jargon used to identify the psalmist's opposition stimulates the imagination of the reader as to the extremity of the oppression the psalmist was subjected to.

In Psalm 140 the references to these so-called violent men are much more extensively referenced than YHWH or the psalmist, magnifying the role of the antagonists in the psalm. This can be seen in the verbs used to describe the violent men's actions. The perfect and imperfect common/male singular/plural verbs have been employed a total of thirteen times, referring to the exploits of these men. Besides, the pronominal suffix 1st person male plural has been employed a total of six times regarding the psalmist's adversaries.

iv. Thematic repetition of words

Even though a clear "I-you" relationship can be distinguished in Psalm 140, where the psalmist is the "I" and YHWH is the "you", there is a very strong presence of a third party – the "evil men" or "men of violence." The psalm depicts, in an equal measure, the relations between the psalmist and YHWH as well as the relations between the psalmist and the wicked. Therefore, the relational framework of Psalm 140 is more accurately depicted as an "I-you-them" relationship.

The replication of the phrase **הַמְּסִים** **בְּאִישׁ** (men of violence) occurs a total of three times throughout Psalm 140, in verses 2, 5 and 12. Brueggemann & Bellinger (2014:586) estimates that this recurrence serves to underline the ceaselessness of the attack on the psalmist. The strategic spacing of the phrase ensures that the emphasis of the psalm continuously falls on the enemies of the psalmist and their attack. The nature of these enemies is further underscored by the repetition of the word **רָשָׁע** (wicked) which occurs in verses 5 and 9. This then characterises the theme of the psalm as a plea for fortification from malicious enemies.

In concomitance with references to the men of violence (in vv. 2 and 5) who persecutes the psalmist, there follows a replication of the phrase **תִּנְצְרֵנִי** (guard me) in verses 2 and 5. This underlines the persecution versus protection theme of Psalm 140. The psalmist is persecuted by violent men and consequently, the psalmist appeals to YHWH for protection.

The psalmist uses a wide array of body parts to describe the nature of the attack, the effect the attack has on the psalmist as well as the position YHWH takes concerning the assault. The body parts referred to include: לֵב (heart) in verse 3; לְשׁוֹן (tongue) in verse 4 and 12; שִׁפָּה (lip) in verses 4 and 10; יָד (hand) in verse 5; פֶּעַם (foot) in verse 5; רֵאשׁ (head) in verse 8 and 10; פָּנֶה (face) in verse 14. This excessive use of body parts serves to personalise the psalmist's experience to the reader as it mediates the psalm into a personal experience.

Within this use of anatomic references, there is a twofold occurrence of the terms לְשׁוֹן (tongue) in verses 4 and 12 and שִׁפָּה (lips) in verses 4 and 10. Both these terms are descriptive of the attack on the psalmist. Mays (1999:430) points out that this repetition suggests that the attack on the psalmist is verbal. Terrien (2003:884) adds that the evil of men is directly linked to that which pour forth from their tongues and lips. Furthermore, a verbal attack possibly suggests false allegation brought against the psalmist. Terrien (2003:883) suggests a domestic dispute rather than a foreign conflict as the so-called 'war' to which the psalmist refers.

4.3.3 Syntactical analysis

This syntactical study is carried out by identifying and using Masoretic markers. The distribution of verses and cola serves as an aid to determine the structure of the psalm and to identify the poetic techniques in the psalm. In Psalm 140 the primary dividing disjunctives are: the *Sillûq*, the *'Atnāḥ* and the *'Ôlē weyôrēd*.

A Masoretic syntactical analysis of Psalm 140:1-14:

Dividing disjunctives		Cola	Line	Vs.	Translation
Dem.	Acc.				
Sil(0)	--	לְמַנְצֵחַ מְזִמּוֹר לְדָוִד:	1a	1	For the supervisor. A psalm for David.

Atn(1)	Tip	חֲלַצְנִי יְהוָה מֵאֵדָם רָע	2a	2	Save me, YHWH, from evil man;
Sil(0)	Tip	מֵאִישׁ חַמְסִים תִּנְצַרְנִי:	b		from man of violence, you guard me.
Atn(1)	--	אֲשֶׁר חָשְׁבוּ רָעוֹת בְּלִבָּם	3a	3	Those who think evil in their heart;
Sil(0)	RebM	כָּל-יּוֹם יִגְרוּ מִלְחָמוֹת:	b		all of the day they stir up war.
OleW (1)	Zar	שָׁנְנוּ לְשׁוֹנָם כְּמוֹ נָחָשׁ	4a	4	They sharpen their tongue like a snake;
Atn(1)	--	חֲמַת עֶכְשׂוֹב	b		the poison of a viper
Sil(0)	Tip	תַּחַת שְׁפָתֵימוֹ סֵלָה:	c		is under their lips. Selah!
RebG (2)	AzLeg	שְׁמַרְנִי יְהוָה מִיַּד רָשָׁע	5a	5	Keep me, YHWH, from the hands of the wicked;
Atn(1)	--	מֵאִישׁ חַמְסִים תִּנְצַרְנִי	b		from man of violence you guard me,
Atn(1)	Tip	אֲשֶׁר חָשְׁבוּ לְדַחֹת פְּעָמַי:	c		from those who think to push my feet.
RebG (2)	Paz	טָמְנוּ גַּאִים פֶּחַ לִי וְחִבְלִים	6a	6	They hide, the haughty, a trap for me and cords;
Atn(1)	Tip	פָּרְשׁוּ רֶשֶׁת לְיַד-מַעְגַּל	b		they spread out a net to the side of the path;
Sil(0)	Tip	מִקְשִׁים שָׂתוּרֵי לִי סֵלָה:	c		traps they lay for me. Selah!
Atn(1)	Tip	אָמַרְתִּי לַיהוָה אֵלֵי אַתָּה	7a	7	I say to YHWH: 'You are my God!
Sil(0)	RebM	הֶאֱזִינָה יְהוָה קוֹל תַּחֲנוּנָי:	b		You must listen YHWH, to the voice of my supplication!'
Atn(1)	Tip	יְהוָה אֲדָנִי עֹז יְשׁוּעָתִי	8a	8	YHWH, Lord, power of my salvation,

Sil(0)	RebM	סִכְתָּה לְרֹאשִׁי בְּיוֹם נֶשֶׁק:	b		you cover my head in the day of battle.
Atn(1)	Tip	אַל־תִּתֵּן יְהוָה מְאוּוֵי רָשָׁע	9a	9	Not you gave, YHWH, the desires of the wicked;
Sil(0)	RebM	זְמֹמוֹ אַל־תִּפֶּק יְרוֹמוֹ סֵלָה:	b		his plans not you granted, or they boasted. Selah!
Atn(1)	--	רֹאשׁ מְסֻבֵּי	10a	10	The head of those surrounding me,
Sil(0)	Tip	שְׂפָתֵימוֹ (יִכְסְמוֹ) [יִכְסְמוֹ]:	b		may the trouble of their lips, cover them.
OleW (1)	RebQ	(יְמִישׁוּ) [יְמִישׁוּ] עֲלֵיהֶם נְחָלִים	11a	11	Let them be shaken on them, coals
Atn(1)	--	בְּאֵשׁ יִפְלֹם	b		of the fire fall on them;
Sil(0)	RebM	בְּמַהְמֹרוֹת בְּלִי־קוֹמוֹ:	c		in the water pits not they will rise up.
OleW (1)	Zar	אִישׁ לְשׁוֹן בְּלִי־כֹחַ בְּאָרֶץ	12a	12	Let man of tongue not he be established on the earth;
Atn(1)	--	אִישׁ־חָמָס רָע	b		man of violence, evil
Sil(0)	RebM	יְצוּדְנוֹ לְמִדְחַפֶּת:	c		they hunt him for power.
Atn(1)	Tip	(יָדַעַת) [יָדַעַת] כִּי־יַעֲשֶׂה יְהוָה דִּין עָנִי	13a	13	I know he does, YHWH, the lawsuit of the humble,
Sil(0)	RebM	מִשְׁפַּט אֲבִינִים:	b		the judgement of the poor.
Atn(1)	Tip	אֵךְ צְדִיקִים יוֹדוּ לְשִׁמְךָ	14a	14	Surely the righteous they praise your name;
Sil(0)	RebM	יֹשְׁבוּ יְשָׁרִים אֶת־פָּנֶיךָ:	b		they sit, the just, before your face.

4.3.4 Structural analysis and content analysis

4.3.4.1 Introduction

When it comes to the structural division of Psalm 140, there are once again divergent opinions.

A five-part division is suggested by Kirkpatrick (1912:739). This suggestion is purely made based on musical integrity and the number of lines per stanza thus rendering the structure of Psalm 140 as divided into four stanzas of six lines each, with a concluding stanza of only four lines. The first stanza, consisting of verses 2-4, drafts a picture of an innocent human being, insistently pursued by unprincipled enemies who plot for this person's demise. This is followed by the second stanza, verses 5-6, in which the psalmist further describes the moral fibre of these enemies. In the third stanza, verses 7-9, the psalmist raises a prayer to the failure of these enemies' plots. Stanza four, consisting of verses 10-12, is a continuation of the foregoing prayer, praying not only that these plots may fail, but also that these plans to ruin the psalmist may be avenged. In conclusion, the fifth and final stanza (vv. 13-14) ends with an expression of confidence in the protection of YHWH. Dahood (1970:301) and Weber (2003:347-349) follow suit when they insist that Psalm 140 should be divided into stanzas of approximately equal length. Terrien (2003:882-883) also stand in support of this division, stating that the final stanza (vv. 13-14), which he calls an *envoi*, is not an editorial addition but a subtle connection to the gratitude and admiration that is portrayed in Psalm 139.

Allen (2002:334) also envisions a five-part division of Psalm 140, but for an entirely different reason. Whereas the foregoing approach ensures the uniformity of the stanzas by ensuring that all stanzas (except the final stanza) are six cola long, this approach uses the occurrence of the divine name יהוה (YHWH) as a marker for the start of every new stanza. The divine name appears in the first colon of verses 2, 5, 7 and 13. However, the divine name occurs in verse 9. Thus, Allen (2003:335) suggests that verse 9 does not belong to the end of the third stanza, but the beginning of the fourth stanza.

A four-part division of Psalm 140 is suggested by Williams (1989:490-493). This suggestion rests on a thematic grouping together of verses. The first stanza, verses 2-6, consist of a series of petitions which in turn is formulated as a prayer for liberation followed by a description of the enemy and their malicious attack on the psalmist. This is followed by the second stanza consisting of verses 7-9, which contains the psalmist's confessions of trust in and loyalty to YHWH. This is followed up with a prayer in which the psalmist pleads that the enemies will not succeed. In the third stanza, verses 10-12, the psalmist declares a curse upon the wicked, that their deeds may cause their downfall. Finally, Psalm 140 closes once again with a confession of faith in YHWH's concern for the downtrodden. Mays (1999:430) supports this four-part division of Psalm 140 and classifies the separate stanzas similarly.

Some propose a three-part division of Psalm 140. In favour of this approach is Anderson (1972:913-918). This simplistic approach divides the content of the psalm into two parts. The first section consists of verses 2-6. Here the psalmist bewails a situation of distress. This is followed by the second section, which consists of verses 7-12, in which the psalmist pleads for judgement on those who inflicted the situation of distress. After the psalmist's lamentations and campaign against the wicked, the psalmist concludes the psalm with an affirmation of confidence in YHWH. Hossfeld & Zenger (2011:550) also supports a similar three-part division of Psalm 140 but adds that the 'Selah!' which occurs after verses 4, 6 and 9 is indicative of a further subdivision of the text. This is true for the first strophe (vv. 2-4) as well as the second (vv. 5-6) which is a two-part prayer. Each of these strophes closes with a subsequent 'Selah!' The following strophe (vv. 7-9), that pleads in prayer to YHWH to defray the onslaught of the wicked, also closes with a 'Selah!'

4.3.4.2 Structural analysis of Psalm 140

HEADING: For David (v. 1)

STANZA I: Lament over enemies' attack (vv.2-6)

STROPHE A: Psalmist harassed by violent men (vv.2-4)

STROPHE B: Petition to YHWH to intercede (vv. 5-6)

STANZA II: Lobbying for YHWH's help (vv. 7-12)

STROPHE C: Confession of trust in YHWH (vv. 7-9)

STROPHE D: Prayer for the demise of adversaries (vv. 10-12)

STANZA III: Praise for YHWH's righteousness (vv. 13-14)

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

4.3.4.3 Content analysis of Psalm 140

Heading: For David

The superscription of Psalm 140 לְמִנְצֵחַ מִזְמוֹר לְדָוִד (For the supervisor. A psalm for David) consists of the same three elements as the superscription of Psalm 139. These three elements include a correspondent, an addressee and a description of the content that is to follow. This particular assemblage appears mainly in the first and second books of the Psalter (Hossfeld & Zenger, 2011:551).²⁰¹

Stanza I: Lament over enemies' attack.

By the pace at which Psalm 140 takes off, it is clear that it is written from a dire situation. In contrast to the preceding psalm, Psalm 140 does not attempt flattery before spurring into request. According to Jones (1974:392), the introduction to the psalm straightaway plunges the reader into the sea of trials and tribulations the psalmist has to endure. The cry for help with which the psalm commences instantly focuses the reader's attention on the motivation for the composition. What follows is an exposition of the burdens suffered by the psalmist in the form of petition and descriptions of the troubles endured (Mays, 1990:430).

Strophe A: Psalmist harassed by violent men

The urgency of the psalmist's request directed at YHWH is emphasised by the preliminary imperative in verse 2 חַלֵּצֵנִי (save me).²⁰² The same verse then

²⁰¹ Cf. the introductory verse to the following Pss. 13, 41, 51, 64 and 65.

²⁰² According to Hossfeld & Zenger (2011:551) the verb used to refer to the divine rescue the psalmist is appealing to חַלֵּץ (save) is not frequently utilised in the *Psalter*. Other occurrences of the verb include Pss. 6:5 and 119:153.

closes with another appeal to the aid of YHWH with the phrase תִּנְצְרֵנִי (guard/protect me). That from which the psalmist longs to be saved or guarded is described with two negative concepts:²⁰³ מֵאֲדָם רָע (from evil man) and מֵאִישׁ חֲמָסִים (from violent man).²⁰⁴ The petition is followed by a description of the evil acts committed against the psalmist. In parallel phrases, the psalmist describes these people as concocting evil motives in their hearts and stirring up conflicts all day long with their venomous tongues. The enemies of the psalmist are likened to that of poisonous snakes, bringing into question the nature of the violence that is attested to. According to Fretheim (2004:20), the violence the psalmist is anxiously protesting against is not physical in nature, but rather verbal.²⁰⁵

Strophe B: Petition to YHWH to intercede

Following the vivid description of the psalmist's suffering, the psalmist now appeals to YHWH to intervene. The psalmist's petition is an expression of the utmost confidence in YHWH. Verse 5 is a variation on the appeal of verse 2, but essentially it is a repetition of the psalmist's initial request. In verse 5 the attack of the enemies is described alternately, as חֲשְׁבוּ לְדַחֹת פְּעָמַי (they think/devise to push my feet). Briggs & Briggs (1969:503) suggests that this phrase is a metaphor describing the enemies' actions as similar to that of a hunter attempting to ensnare his prey. The psalmist calls on YHWH to take note of these injustices and to react to them accordingly.

²⁰³ Hossfeld & Zenger (2011:551) points to the generalisation of these terms and suggests that it hints to the wisdom motif of the psalm.

²⁰⁴ The concept אִישׁ חֲמָסִים (men of violence) is commonly used in the first and second davidic *Psalter*. Cf. Pss. 18:49; 11:5; 27:12; 35:11 and 52:3.

²⁰⁵ The violence which is referred to by the psalmist occurs through the use of words. Fretheim (2004:20) describes this verbal violence as: slander, false accusations, defamation and gossip. He further lists the repercussions of verbal violence as: promoting suspicion, contempt and hostility. Although verbal violence does not seem quit as dangerous, it is often the gateway to physical violence and should not be regarded as a minor transgression.

Stanza II: Lobbying for YHWH's help

The call for help from the psalmist reaches a definite climax in the second stanza when the psalmist employs prayer as a mode of counter-attack. Terrien (2003:884) suggests that the second stanza displays an escalation in the brewing conflict,²⁰⁶ resulting in the psalmist taking a more aggressive approach – turning to the omnipotent YHWH's aid and lobbying for YHWH's support through prayer.

Strophe C: Confession of trust in YHWH

For the first time since the start of Psalm 140, the psalmist now turns to YHWH in a direct address. By directly speaking to YHWH, the psalmist emphasises faith and trust in YHWH. Hossfeld & Zenger (2011:552) rightly asserts that the direct address points to a personal relationship between the psalmist and YHWH. The independent pronoun 2nd person male singular 'you' is used in verse 7 to illustrate that the psalmist turns away from his/her efforts to defeat the opposition and now deliberately turns to YHWH (you). Allen (2002:336) suggests that this is a confession of the psalmist's faith. The petition for YHWH to listen is not an unusual occurrence in the psalms and speaks to the intensity of the situation the psalmist is in. In verse 8 follows another, and even stronger, confession of trust

Strophe D: Prayer for the demise of adversaries

Here the psalmist pleads that whatever plans the enemies have schemed may ensnare themselves. Goldingay (2008:648) calls it poetic justice to pray that the trouble intended for the psalmist may fall on and overwhelm those who plotted it. Goulder (1998:253) states that the desire expressed in verses 10-12 is a reference to the magnificent deliverance of YHWH's anointed in Psalm 18.²⁰⁷ Kirkpatrick (1912:793) suggests that the psalmist prayer here is for the fate of Sodom to engulf the enemies of the psalmist, i.e. that they may be consumed by fire and brimstone. The summary of the misdeeds of the enemies in verse

²⁰⁶ Terrien (2003:884) alludes to the fact that comparing the attack of the psalmist's enemies to that of wild animals is suggestive of the extreme terror taking hold of the psalmist.

²⁰⁷ In Ps. 18 YHWH liberates psalmist by means of a tempest in which elements such as consuming fire, blazing coals, hailstones and bolts of lightning rained on the attackers. This is then followed by the valleys, the seas and the foundations of the earth being exposed. In Ps. 140 we see a yearning for the repetition of this display of YHWH's power.

12 is a reminder of the psalmist initial lament in verses 2, 4 and 5 employing repetition of phrases the reader is already familiar with.²⁰⁸ This serves as a reminder of the transgressions made against the psalmist.

Stanza III: Praise for YHWH's righteousness

The psalmist starts with a lament which overflows in prayer and ultimately culminates in praise. This concluding praise consists of a recognition of YHWH's judgeship and at the same time an acknowledgement of YHWH's championing of the oppressed.

Strophe E: YHWH sides with the meek and the virtuous

Throughout the psalm, the psalmist drafts a very lucid image of the enemies. They are depicted as violent men who attempt to ensnare the psalmist with their sharp and poisonous tongues. Furthermore, they are defined as people consumed by their pride with no regard for the lowly. In the closing of the psalm, the reader finally obtains a glimpse on the psalmist self-image. The psalmist expresses confidence in YHWH to take care of the lawsuit of the עָנִי (humble) and the judgement of the אֲבִיּוֹן (poor). This is followed by an assertion that the צַדִּיק (righteous) will praise the name of YHWH. All these nouns are descriptive of the psalmist's self-image: humble, poor and righteous. Intertwined with this first description of the psalmist, is an affirmation of confidence in YHWH to fortify someone of the above-mentioned standing. Tomes (2005:99) asserts that these affirmations serve only to colour the psalmist's loyalty to YHWH. Brueggemann & Bellinger (2014:587) asserts that the concluding unit to Psalm 140 is typical of the expectant conclusion to most laments because the psalmist expresses certainty that YHWH heeds the suffering of the supplicant and ensures justice for the needy. In the conclusion to the psalm, a striking reference is made to the presence of YHWH. When the psalmist states that יֹשְׁבוּ יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶת-פָּנָיָהּ (the just sit before your face), it is implied that YHWH

²⁰⁸ The phrase אִישׁ-חֲזָקִים (man of violence) is a reminder of the use of the same phrase in vv. 2 and 5. Whereas the phrase אִישׁ לְשׁוֹן (man of tongue) in v. 12 reminds of the actions of the enemy in v. 4: שָׁנְנוּ לְשׁוֹנָם (they sharpen their tongue).

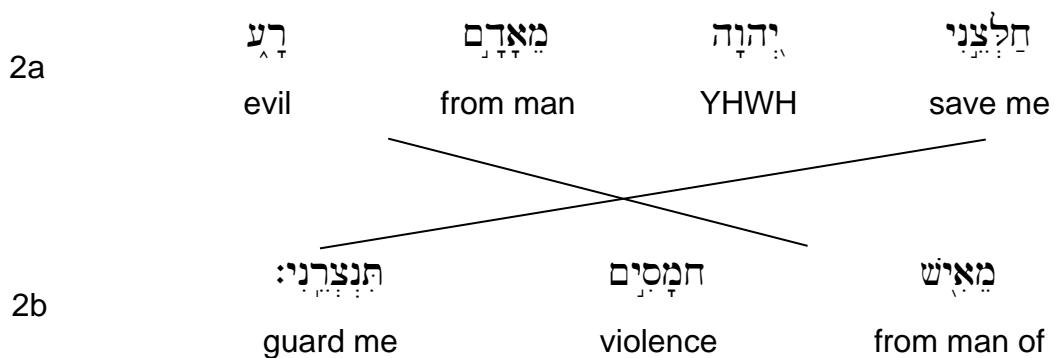
sees everything the righteous does. This statement thus hints to YHWH's omnipresence.

4.3.5 Poetic analysis

In this section, selected poetic techniques of Psalm 140 are discussed:

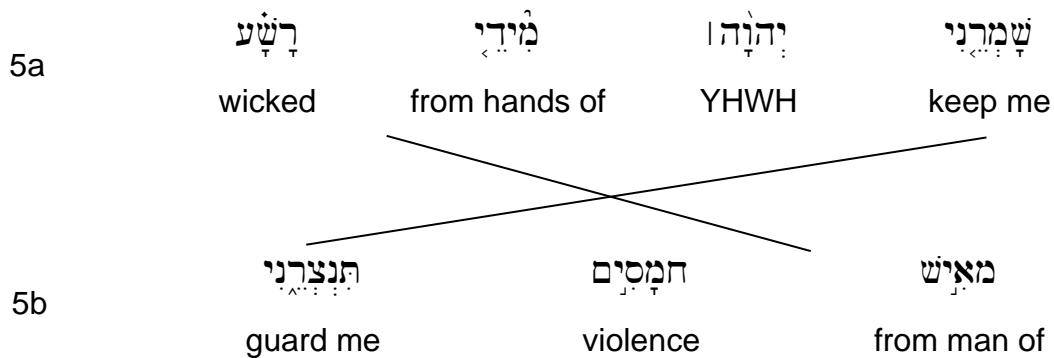
An irregular meter can be discerned in Psalm 140.²⁰⁹ Despite the irregular meter, the first four strophes (strophes A, B, C and D) are symmetrically construed, each containing three bicola (Terrien, 2003:883).

Both repetition and parallelism are important poetic techniques employed in Psalm 140. Weber (2003:348-349) notes that the first two strophes (strophes A and B) are bound by the parallelism formed between their introductory verses, verses 2 and 5. In both verses, the psalmist refers to the enemies as רָע מְאֹדִים (evil men) and חֲמוּסִים מְאִישׁ (men of violence). Within these two parallel verses (vv. 2 and 5), two chiasms respectively materialise. The first appears in verses 2a and 2b. This chiasm is formed between the psalmist's plea for help and the attack the psalmist is attempting to ward off, by calling on divine assistance.



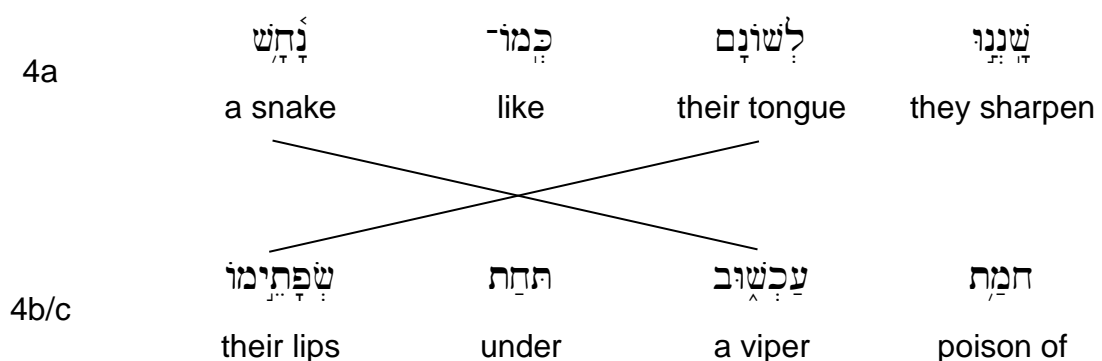
²⁰⁹ According to Allen (2003:332-333) the following meter can be discerned in Psalm 140: 4+3, 4+3, 3+4, 3+3+3, 3+3+3, 4+3, 3+4, 4+3, 2+3, 3+4, 3+4, 3+4 and 3+3.

A chiasm of a similar nature can be found in verses 5a and 5b.



Both the above-mentioned chiasms serve to emphasise the predicament of the psalmist and to accentuate the psalmist's plea for deliverance from these obscure characters. Goulder (1998:251) evokes the thought that these chiasms correspond to the movement of the text, which is: collusion to conflict; conflict; conflict immobilisation. In the first chiasm (i.e. v. 2) the psalmist opens with a description of the collusion to conflict. The psalmist lifts an appeal to YHWH to remove the wicked for they intend to harm. The second chiasm (i.e. v. 5) makes it clear that what once was the only collusion, now went into full effect and that YHWH should guard the psalmist against the preying hands of the wicked.

Another noteworthy chiasm is that of verses 4a and 4b/c.



The psalmist likens these enemies to that of snakes with sharp and poisonous tongues and lips. By structuring 'their lips' and 'their tongue' in a chiastic fashion, the psalmist emphasise these concepts. This answers the question if the attack on the psalmist is verbal in nature.

An interesting case of alliteration presents itself in verse 4a with the repetition of the 'š'-sound: כְּמוֹ-נָחָשׁ לְשׁוֹנָם שְׁנֵנוּ (šonēnû lešōnom kemō noḥoš). The repetition of the *shin* alludes to the hissing sound a serpent makes, and in this fashion strengthens the metaphor employed by the psalmist.

The synonymous parallelism in verse 3a and 3b serves to underline the sinister intentions of those opposing the psalmist. Those contesting the psalmist רְעוֹת קִשְׁבוּ (they think evil)²¹⁰ and מִלְחָמוֹת יִגְדְּרוּ (they stir up war).²¹² The psalmist not only emphasise the intentions of the wicked but also their deeds, in the hope of getting a sympathetic ear from YHWH.

Psalm 140 closes off with two parallelisms in its final stanza. The first parallelism occurs in verse 13a and 13b. Where the act of violence is described by the parallelism in verse 3, now the restitution of the oppressed is once again presented in parallel form. In verse 13a it is emphasised the YHWH takes care of the עֲנִי דָּיִן (lawsuit of the humble) as well as the מִשְׁפַּט אֲבִינִים (the judgement of the poor). With this, the psalmist draws attention to YHWH's care for the meek.

Final parallelism is seen in verse 14a and 14b. The actions of the righteous are staged employing parallelism. First, the righteous are described as offering praise to the holy name of YHWH - יִרְדּוּ לְשִׁמְךָ (they praise your name). Thereafter, the righteous are described as sitting in the presence of YHWH - יֵשְׁבוּ אֶת-פָּנֶיךָ (they sit in your face). Through this parallelism, the psalmist outlines the mutuality of the relationship the meek has with YHWH. On the side of the meek, praises are offered to YHWH, while YHWH offers an omnipresence to those who humble themselves before the divine.

Greenberg (1977:149) points out a unique form of personification in verse 12. The term רָע (evil) in verse 12b is grammatically attached to the phrase לְמִדְחַפֶּת יְצוּדָנוּ (evil in verse 12b is grammatically attached to the phrase

²¹⁰ Cf. Pss. 35:4, 20; 41:8; 52:4.

²¹¹ Cf. Pss. 56:7; 59:4.

²¹² Both these references occur in the first two davidic collections (Hossfeld & Zenger, 2011:551).

(they hunt him for power). This implies that ‘evil’ is hunting the psalmist. ‘Evil’ is thus personified as a hunter, preying on the psalmist. This poetic technique creates a vivid picture of the psalmist being pursued relentlessly, by some form of wickedness (or evil), like a deer being hunted.

McCann (1996:1239-1240) points out the repetition of four terms. These terms all occur a second time, but in reverse order, to form an *inclusio*. These four terms include: רָע (evil) in verses 2 and 12; חָמָס (violence) in verses 2 and 12; שָׁפָה (lip) in verses 4 and 10; רָשָׁע (wicked) in verses 5 and 9. This indicates that verses 6-8 form the key to understanding the contents of Psalm 140. Central to these verses is the declaration of the psalmist: אָמַרְתִּי לַיהוָה אֱלֹהֵי (I say to YHWH: You are my God!). Brueggemann & Bellinger (2014:586) states that the emphasis of Psalm 140 falls on the psalmist’s enemies. It is, however, important to note that the *inclusio* centres on the psalmist’s trust in YHWH. By implication, the psalm does bemoan the attack of enemies, but the lament should be read in the light of this declaration of faith and trust in YHWH.

These above-mentioned poetic devices colour the theme of Psalm 140 as: Trust in YHWH amidst the attack of enemies. The psalmist draws a vivid picture of the enemies that the psalmist is being pursued by, comparing them to serpents that poison with their mouths and/or tongues. However, midst the havoc that is being wreaked by the enemies, the psalmist remains steadfast in his/her trust in YHWH. This trust is anchored in the belief that YHWH sides with the humble, poor and righteous. The psalmist makes plain this trust by intentionally proclaiming to YHWH, in front of the enemies: ‘You are my God!’

4.3.6. Genre and Sitz im Leben

The general agreement amongst scholars is that Psalm 140 should be classified by *genre* as a lament. The standard elements of a lament include a general address to YHWH; a description of the psalmist’s crisis; a petition for the favour of YHWH and finally an optimistic conclusion. All of these are present in Psalm 140. Based on these basic elements constituting a lament, Allen (2002:334) provides a short exposition of

Psalm 140 to illustrate that the psalm fits the *genre*. In verses 2-4 the psalmist calls for YHWH's aid, while describing the crisis that befalls the psalmist – i.e. being pursued by evil/violent men. This pattern is then repeated in verses 5-6, emphasising this cry of distress. The psalmist petitions YHWH's favour by making a bold confession of trust in verse 7: “*You are my God!*” This is followed by statements in which the psalmist underlines trust in YHWH. Finally, the psalm concludes with a reasonably optimistic outlook. Even though deliverance is only pending, the psalm closes in verses 13-14, with the feeling of assurance that YHWH sides with the oppressed.

Even though scholars agree that Psalm 140 must be classified as a lament, it remains uncertain if Psalm 140 is the lament of an individual or that of a community.

According to Dahood (1970:301), the personal nature of the lament is seen in the way the psalmist bemoans the enemies. The description of the attack seems to be personal in nature, as it is implied that the attack involves the slandering of an individual. Schmidt (1928:28-29) likens the *genre* of Psalm 140 to that of Psalm 27 stating that the psalm addresses the defamation of the character of an innocent person. Anderson (1992:913) insists that Psalm 140 should be even further classified as an individual lament of an accused man, proposing that the attack is that of false accusations brought against the psalmist. This refined *genre* classification depicts the attackers as false accusers. There is, however, no description of the supposed false accusations in the psalm. The reference to the attackers' 'tongues' and 'lips' does not seem enough evidence to postulate defamation as the cause of the psalmist's lament.

Mowinckel (1992:220) argues that the psalm should rather be understood as a communal lament. A case can be made for a reading of the text from a national background based on the use of terms such as מִלְחָמָה (war) in verse 3 and מִלְחָמָה (battle) in verse 8. This reading of the text implies that the psalmist is a king or national leader, pleading with YHWH for protection of the whole nation, not just individual protection. Eaton (1986:63) adds that the psalmist's form of address for YHWH as אֱלֹהֵי (my God) is an expression that was earmarked for leaders of the nation such as kings, priests and prophets. Only leaders of the nation used this designation for YHWH.

Although Hossfeld & Zenger (2011:551) stand in support of an individual lament *genre* classification, they specifically reference the psalmist's closing remarks in verses 13-14. An argument is made based on the psalmist's reference to the עָנִי (humble), the אֲבִיּוֹן (poor) and the צַדִּיק (righteous) it could be inferred that the psalmist is lamenting some form of group-conflict between the righteous and the wicked.²¹³

Terrien (2003:883) concedes that the distinct plea for deliverance creates the impression that Psalm 140 belongs to the *genre* of an individual lament/complaint. However, due to the celebratory nature of the closing verses of the psalm, the psalm is enunciated as a hymn that applauds the assistance of YHWH.

As a *Sitz im Leben*, Terrien (2003:883) argues that the term מִלְחָמָה (war) is used in a hyperbolic fashion. Thus, the psalm does not reference war as an international incident, but simply a domestic dispute. The character of the dispute is coloured by the respective phrases in verse 4: שִׁנְנוּ לְשׁוֹנָם כְּמוֹ-נָחָשׁ (they sharpen their tongue like a snake) and חֲמַת עֵכָשׁוּב תַּחַת שִׁפְתֵימוֹ (the poison of a viper is under their lips). According to Terrien (2003:883) these phrases assist in concluding that the nature of the dispute is simply quarrelling with words between fellow citizens. Those supporting a communal lament as the *genre* for Psalm 140, such as Bittenwieser (1938:723) differs on the proposed *Sitz im Leben*, stating that the conflict is a case of national distress and not a personal quarrel. In support of this standpoint, an argument is made that the defence of the poor and humble (in vv. 13 and 14) is a reference to YHWH's aid offered to a repressed nation. Gerstenberger (2001:410) adds that economic exploitation, repression, defamation and inequality are all forms of possible scenarios for the composition of Psalm 140.

Psalm 140 can reasonably be defined as a lament, based on the bemoaning of enemies and their attack. However, it remains unclear if the psalm is the lament of an

²¹³ Hossfeld & Zenger (2011:551) consider Psalm 140 as an individual lament which is meditative of some form of group conflict between the righteous and the wicked. This unique character of the psalm (an individual bewailing a situation of group-conflict) give rise to the notion that Ps. 140 may reflect a wisdom-style, reflective lament.

individual or the lament of a community, based on the vagueness in the description of the enemies' attack. The *Sitz im Leben* seems to remain uncertain.

4.3.7 Dating and authorship

Dahood (1970:301) notes the unusual amount of *hapax legomena* and archaic word forms that appears in Psalm 140 and suggests that this points to an early date of composition, most likely a pre-exilic date.

Buttenwieser (1938:723) is convinced that Psalm 140 reflects the same situation of national distress that is revealed in two preceding psalms (Pss. 57 and 59)²¹⁴ and thus the date of composition, if correlated to these compositions, should be post-exilic, most probably the years 318-312 BCE. Terrien (2003:884) also advocates for a post-exilic date but maintains that the date cannot be pinpointed due to the general terminology used by the psalmist. The request for the wicked not to be established on אָרֶץ (earth) makes it clear that no specific location is involved in the psalmist's appeal. Without a place, the time of composition remains unanswered. However, Terrien (2003:884) suggests that lacking a fixed location may indicate that the psalm was composed by a member of the Diaspora who is far from Zion and who is solely dependent on the company of his/her God.

Maclaren (1894:394) notes the many parallels between Psalm 140 and other psalms ascribed to David but points out that nothing in Psalm 140 indicates original davidic composition. As a result, davidic authorship cannot be used in the determination of the date of composition. Phillips (1988:601) reckons that davidic authorship should not be disqualified as there are many occasions in the life of David that could have given rise to the composition of Psalm 140. One of the examples used to support this conviction is where David is hounded and hunted by the men in Saul's court. However plausible, this theory is based on pure speculation.

²¹⁴ In Ps. 57:5 the phrase תַּרְבֵּי תַּרְבֵּי וְלִשְׁוֹנָם (and their tongues a sharp sword) and in Ps. 59:8 the phrase תַּרְבֹּת בְּשִׁפְתוֹתֵיהֶם (swords are in their lips) remind of Ps. 140:4.

It is safe to conclude with the sentiments of Burch (2012:8) that most of the individual poems in the Psalter have a distinctive message born out of inimitable circumstances or happenings. It is however mostly impossible to tie the composition to a specific time or event as in the case of Psalm 140. Due to a lack of historical clues in the text, the reader is forced to take the position of Kraus (1989:522) who concludes that the date of composition and authorship of Psalm 140 is beyond determination.

4.4. Comparative relationship between Psalms 138-140

In this section, the relationships between Psalm 139 and its direct neighbouring psalms will be explored. The aim of this comparison between Psalm 139 and its preceding psalm (Psalm 138) and its following psalm (Psalm 140), is to understand the interconnectedness of these texts and to discern possible redactional alteration.

4.4.1. Comparative relationship between Psalms 138 and Psalm 139

When comparing Psalms 138 and 139, there are many similarities between the two texts indicating a strong relationship between the psalms.

The first point of contact between Psalms 138 and 139 is the role-players:

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

Even though the author of Psalm 139 makes use of other proper nouns in reference to the Lord, preference is given to the יהוה (YHWH) in verses 1, 4 and 21. In Psalm 138 the addressee remains anonymous until verse 4. Thereafter the proper noun 'YHWH' is used in verses 4, 5, 6 and 8.

Both Psalm 138 and Psalm 139 display an “I-you” relationship which testifies to the well-established bond that exists between the psalmist (the “I”) and YHWH (the “you”). Both psalms are composed in the 1st person singular style, attesting to the personal nature of the content of the psalms. The personal character of both psalms is revealed in the petitioner’s dependence on YHWH. The author of Psalm 138 affirms YHWH’s preservation in the midst of distress and the anger of enemies (v. 7). At the same time, the author of Psalm 139 unequivocally announces on two occasions that YHWH is intimately familiar with the details of his/her life (vv. 1, 2, 4 and 23). It becomes clear, in both instances, that the life of the psalmist is dependent on YHWH’s provision and protection and in both instances, the psalmist certainly knows this.

Each of the two psalms mentions enemies/adversaries as antagonists, though they are respectively mentioned in a different capacity. In Psalm 138 the psalmist makes note of the anger of enemies from which the psalmist is guarded by YHWH. The enemies referred to is that of the psalmist. Whereas Psalm 139 initially refers to the evil/wicked who plot against YHWH and misuse YHWH’s name. Only then the psalmist exclaims hatred towards those who hate YHWH. The enemies then referred to is adopted in some sense. They are enemies of the psalmist, not because they transgressed against the psalmist, but purely because they are the enemies of YHWH. Nonetheless, in both cases, the psalmists are faced by some or other adversary.

Comparing the psalms reveal that in both cases YHWH observes from afar. Psalm 138 recognises the fact that YHWH takes note of the humble, but only observes the proud מִמְּרֹתָק (from a distance). In Psalm 139, on the other hand, the psalmist discloses that YHWH takes note of the psalmist’s thoughts מִמְּרֹחֵק (from afar). Both instances emphasise a hypothetical distance between YHWH and mankind, thus underlining the sovereignty of YHWH.

YHWH’s sovereignty should be noted in conjunction with the role that YHWH holds as Creator, which also emerges in both psalms. Psalm 138 refers to מַעֲשֵׂי יָדֶיךָ אֵל־תִּתְּרֶךָ (works of your hands not you abandon) in verse 8, inferring YHWH as Creator who is profusely involved with what was created by YHWH. Psalm 139, on the other hand,

underlines YHWH's intimate participation in the process of creation. Verse 13 details how the psalmist was woven by YHWH in the womb of the psalmist's mother, while verse 14 praises YHWH for the meticulousness of YHWH's creative works. In both psalms, it is not only YHWH's role as the Creator that is underlined but also YHWH's creative participation in what was created by YHWH.

From the two above-mentioned themes that are shared by Psalms 138 and 139, namely 'YHWH's sovereignty' and 'YHWH's creative participation in creation' it is clear that the author(s) of the respective psalms set out to underline the duality of YHWH. On the one hand, there is this distance between YHWH and mankind. YHWH knows of and takes note of mankind from afar. This denotes YHWH's superiority over the whole of creation, including mankind. On the other hand, the psalmist(s) experience a consoling closeness in YHWH's participation in creation, and more specifically in the life of mankind. This accentuates the intimacy with which YHWH engages in the life of mankind. The duality expressed in both psalms underlines YHWH's superiority over the psalmist(s) versus YHWH's intimate involvement in the life of the psalmist(s).

This gives rise to another common theme shared by both Psalms 138 and 139 – the theme of the universality of YHWH. In Psalm 138 the psalmist expresses in verse 4 that כָּל־מַלְכֵי־אֶרֶץ (all the kings of the earth) will join in praising YHWH. This “striking poetic affirmation of faith” as it is described by Brueggemann & Bellinger (2014:582) communicates an audience to the liberation effected by YHWH on an international scale. Where once it was only the voices of the chosen people of YHWH that acknowledged YHWH's kingship and praised YHWH accordingly, now all the kings of the earth will hail the redemptive actions of YHWH. This notion of the universality of YHWH is further unpacked, in a more personal manner, by the author of Psalm 139. Here, at the hand of extensive merisms used in verses 7-12, the psalmist realises that there is nowhere to hide where the presence of YHWH is not imminent. At first, the deeds of YHWH become universally known, thereafter the psalmist considers the personal implication of the universality of YHWH.

In both Psalms 138 and 139, there is an underlying tone of thankfulness resulting in praise. Within the first two verses of Psalm 138, the psalmist irrefutably expresses

intent to praise YHWH. This is accomplished by using the following two eloquent phrases: **אֶלֶּהִים אֶזְמַרְךָ בְּכָל־לִבִּי** (I will praise you with all my heart)²¹⁵ and **אֶלֶּהִים אֶזְמַרְךָ בְּנֶגֶד** (in front of gods I will make music to you).²¹⁶ The reason provided for the psalmist's thankfulness, according to verse 2, is: YHWH's **חֶסֶד** (goodness/faithfulness) and **אֱמֶת** (truth). The situational circumstances are further expanded on in verse 3 as a cry of distress on which YHWH responded by strengthening the psalmist. Thus, in Psalm 138 gratitude is expressed for provisions made by YHWH, which results in praise. Only in verse 14 of Psalm 139, the psalmist expresses thankfulness and intent to praise YHWH. This follows a description of YHWH's involvement in the creation of the psalmist in his/her mother's womb. The psalmist praise YHWH and expresses thankfulness after contemplating the way he/she was created by YHWH.

One more theme shared by both Psalms 138 and 139 is that of the time setting of 'eternity'. In Psalm 138 the psalmist states that the goodness of YHWH will last for **עוֹלָם** (forever). This is an adaptation of a common phrase which occurs multiple times²¹⁷ throughout Book V of the *Psalter*: **לְעוֹלָם חֶסֶדְךָ** (His love endures forever).²¹⁸ By nature of the use of the phrase in verse 8, it is utilised once again to express thankfulness toward YHWH for providing for and sustaining the psalmist. In Psalm 139 the noun **עוֹלָם** (forever) is applied in a completely different context. Here the word is not used to relate praise to YHWH, but rather to petition guidance for the psalmist. The psalmist pleads with YHWH to be led 'in the way everlasting'. The everlasting way to

²¹⁵ According to Hossfeld & Zenger (2011:528) the psalmist is insinuating obedience to the principal commandment in Dt. 6:5: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart..."

²¹⁶ In the light of similar references made to the gods in Pss. 82:1; 86:8 and 96:4, the conclusion can be made that the psalmist is indeed referencing the deities of other nations (Hossfeld & Zenger, 2011:528). This notion is further strengthened with the following line stating **אֶשְׁתַּחֲוֶה אֶל־הַיְכָל קִדְשֶׁךָ** (I will bow down towards your holy temple), which implies that the psalmist is not near the temple but rather somewhere abroad where the deities of heathen nations are worshipped.

²¹⁷ Cf. Pss. 100:5; 106:1; 118:1, 20; 136:1-26.

²¹⁸ The psalm which turned this phrase into an idiom is Ps. 136. Here the words **כִּי לְעוֹלָם חֶסֶדְךָ** (for his love endures forever) are repeated a total of twenty-six times. According to Human (2004:86) Ps. 136 is an inventory of commendable elements in YHWH's deeds and character, calling on believers to give credit where credit is due. It should be noted that the psalm in which this phrase is repeated, is located only two psalms prior to Ps. 138 in the *Psalter*. Thus, what we see in Ps. 138, could either be remnants or an imitation of this hymnic thanksgiving to YHWH.

which is referred in verse 24 is descriptive of Israel's moral behaviour (Hossfeld & Zenger, 2011:545) – a way of life according to the Torah, which consists of religious, moral and behavioural laws.²¹⁹ In Psalm 139 the reference to עוֹלָם is thus to express obedience.

There are a series of verbal connections that are shared between Psalms 138 and 139 (Weber, 2003:345):

Verbal connections	Psalm 138:	Psalm 139:
יָדַע (know)	6	1; 2; 4; 14; 23
דֶּרֶךְ (way)	5	3; 24
הֵלֵךְ (to go / to walk)	7	7
רָאָה (to see)	6	16; 24
יָד (hand) / יְמִין (right hand)	7	10
יָדָה (praise)	1; 4	14
מַעֲשֵׂה (work)	8	14
אֵיב (to be hostile) or (enemies)	7	22
עוֹלָם (for ever)	8	24

These verbal relations between both psalms open an improved comprehension of the comparative relationship shared by Psalms 138 and 139:

The first verbal point of contact between the psalms is the perfect knowledge of YHWH. In Psalm 138 the psalmist emphasises the fact that, despite YHWH's exaltation, YHWH remains intimately acquainted with humankind. When referring to the fact that YHWH רָאָה (see) and יָדַע (know) the psalmist is simply attempting to bridge the gap between the transcendence of YHWH (in v. 6) and the intimate participation of YHWH in the life of the lowly/humble (in v. 7). Along these lines, it can

²¹⁹ Cf. Jr. 6:16. Here the author refers to the everlasting way as the "ancient paths" and the "good way." Accompanying the directive to walk in the everlasting way is the promise of rest for the yielding soul.

be deduced that that which connects the omnipresence of YHWH with the omnipotence of YHWH is, in fact, the omniscience of YHWH. The theme of YHWH's knowledge/omniscience is only shortly referred to in Psalm 138, whereas it is widely expanded on in Psalm 139, to the extent to which it becomes the recurrent theme that permeates the whole psalm. Here the psalmist starts the psalm off (in v. 1) with a declaration of YHWH's intimate knowledge of the psalmist. In verse 2 this knowledge is colourfully illustrated by pointing out that YHWH is knowledgeable about the psalmist's every action. Verse 4 further expands YHWH's knowledge as familiarity with the psalmist's words even before they are spoken, thus implying foreknowledge and insight into the psalmist's world of thought. Finally, the psalmist relies on this perfect knowledge of YHWH to filter through the psalmist intentions and examine the psalmist's thoughts.²²⁰

Another verbal connection shared by Psalms 138 and 139 are found in their references to the **בְּדַרְכֵי יְהוָה** (way). In Psalm 138 the earthly monarchs join in the praises **בְּדַרְכֵי יְהוָה** (in the ways of YHWH). The 'ways of YHWH' as it is employed in Psalm 138 can be understood in two ways. First, it could be suggestive of YHWH's merciful involvement in the life of the psalmist in the sense that God's care is paving the way (Anderson, 1972:903).²²¹ Second, it could suggest that the kings of the earth are on a literal pathway leading up to the temple of YHWH, all the while singing and praising YHWH during their pilgrimage (Goulder, 1998:234).²²² In Psalm 139 the psalmist states in verse 3 that YHWH is familiar with his/her ways. Later on, in the closing words of the

²²⁰ Carasik (2000:226) suggests that there is in fact a limit to YHWH's omniscience and that YHWH can only observe that which is external. This is, however, contradicted by the affirmation of the author of Ps. 139. In v. 4 the psalmist states that YHWH knows words even before they are uttered, thus claiming that YHWH can discern a human being's thoughts and freely has access to the inner world of the psalmist. As a further confirmation the psalmist testifies to this so-called internal knowledge of YHWH by specifically requesting it. In v. 23 the psalmist requests that YHWH discern that which takes place in the psalmist's heart.

²²¹ Zehnder (1999:508) refers to this as the "*Weg Theologie*" or rather the "Way Theology" in which history is interpreted as a path that is proverbially paved by YHWH with specific reference to YHWH's dealings with the people of God in history. If earthly monarchs are to join in this proverbial 'way of YHWH' it would mean that they turn away from their deities and choose solely to follow and worship YHWH who has proven throughout history to be completely faithful to God's people.

²²² Goulder (1998:234) insist that the coupling of the phrase **בְּדַרְכֵי יְהוָה** (in the ways of YHWH) with the phrase **כְּבוֹד יְהוָה** (glory of YHWH) points to the parade of exiles returning to their land as can be seen in Is. 60.

psalm, the psalmist makes a double petition mimicking the ambivalence that is observed in verses 1-18 and 19-22 (Harrelson, 1975:265): first, the psalmist requests YHWH to see if the **דֶּרֶךְ-עֲצָב** (way of the idol) is in the psalmist; second, the psalmist appeals to YHWH to be led **בְּדֶרֶךְ עוֹלָם** (in the way everlasting).²²³ In these requests the psalmist points to two opposed ‘ways.’ The first is the way of veneration of idols and/or pagan religions.²²⁴ The second is the everlasting way or rather the way of the past.²²⁵ When considering the options of interpretation, the psalms overlap here. The ‘way of YHWH’ and the ‘everlasting way’ both uphold some type of historical data that suggests there is a righteous way to live and that only YHWH can aid and abet in such a way of life. Both the authors of Psalms 138 and 139 are seeking the perfect ways of YHWH by which to lead one’s life.

Psalms 138 and 139 further correlates in their use of the term **הִלַּךְ** (to go / to walk). In Psalm 138:7 the psalmist points out that when walking amidst distressing circumstances, YHWH intervenes and preserves the psalmist. In Psalm 139 the psalmist asks a rhetoric question: ‘Where do I go/walk [to hide from] your spirit?’ This question is rhetorically formulated to imply that there is nowhere to go/walk where YHWH is not already present and ready, in a preserving capacity, to lend assistance to the psalmist. Wherever the psalmist goes/walks, in whatever situation the psalmist might be found, there YHWH will accompany the psalmist and lend YHWH’s perfect aid.

One of the more interesting verbal links that are shared by Psalms 138 and 139 is the use of the word **רָאָה** (see). In Psalm 138 the psalmist states that YHWH sees the lowly as opposed to just knowing the haughty from a distance. To **רָאָה** can thus be

²²³ Zehnder (1999:564) offers an interesting perspective on this request of the psalmist. When the psalmist asks to be led in the ‘everlasting way,’ everlasting should be understood as referencing the so-called old way of life – that is the way in which Israel’s forefathers lived, thus the way of law and righteousness. This request should thus be understood as an indirect claim of innocence.

²²⁴ According to Hossfeld & Zenger (2011:545) the reference made to idol-worship is a dual reference that alternates between the worship of pagan idols (in addition to worship of YHWH) and renunciation of YHWH-worship altogether for a pagan-religion.

²²⁵ Hossfeld & Zenger (2011:545) asserts that the everlasting way refers to Israel’s observance of the laws of the Torah. The prayer of the psalmist evokes a recollection of the old ways and does not pontificate an eschatological goal.

interpreted as to be intimately familiar with something/someone. The use of the same word in Psalm 139 underlines this interpretation. In verse 16 it is accentuated that YHWH can see where no human being ever can. YHWH is able to see inside the womb or maybe even beyond than that.²²⁶ In the final verse of Psalm 139, the psalmist takes ownership of this all-pervasive eyes that is on the psalmist all the time when insisting that YHWH must see of the way of the idol is in the psalmist. Now the psalmist insists that YHWH must look and see where no human eye ever can: in the psalmist's heart. Both Psalms 138 and 139 share this crucial contact point that nothing escapes the all-seeing and transcendent eyes of YHWH, who is capable of seeing the lowly (Ps. 138) and the supplicant (Ps. 139).

A key verbal connection shared by both psalms is the tautological use of the respective terms: יָד (hand) and יְמִינֶיךָ (right hand). In Psalm 138 the psalmist refers to YHWH's hand in a protective capacity, while Psalm 139 underlines the guiding capacity of YHWH's hand. What is accomplished, is that, in both instances, YHWH's power and authority can be seen. The right hand of YHWH indicates the favour of God²²⁷ which accompany the psalmist(s). The hand/right hand of YHWH thus becomes symbols of both intervention (Hossfeld & Zenger, 2011:530)²²⁸ and approval in Psalms 138 and 139.

A final verbal connection to touch on in the comparison between Psalms 138 and 139 is the use of the term מַעֲשֵׂה (work). Both psalms utilise this word in the same manner, to refer to that which is created by YHWH. In Psalm 138 the psalmist declares confidence that YHWH will not abandon what YHWH has created, while the psalmist of Psalm 139 marvels at YHWH's creation. In both cases, however, these so-called works of YHWH are the underpinning on which the praise in both psalms are established.

²²⁶ It is possible that the psalmist is hinting to the possibility that YHWH can see far beyond the mother's womb to the psalmist's pre-existence.

²²⁷ Longman, Ryken & Wilhoit (1998:727-728) explain that when the right hand is specifically mentioned, it indicates favour. Aaron and his sons comprising the priesthood, were to be marked with blood on their right ear, thumb and big toe (cf. Ex. 29:19-20). Furthermore, an invitation to be seated at someone's right hand side indicates prestige, while giving someone the right hand in greeting was to acknowledge the one who is greeted and to show goodwill.

²²⁸ Cf. Pss. 21:9; 89:14.

Comparing Psalms 138 and 139 on a poetic level reveals that one of the central poetic techniques employed in Psalm 139 is the *inclusio* formed by the words חָקַר (to search) and יָדַע (to know) in verses 1b and 23a. This inclusion does not only serve to bind the separate units of the psalm together, but it also serves to emphasises the theme of the psalm as YHWH's omnipresence and omnipotence. This same poetic technique is displayed in Psalm 138. The repetition of the word חַסְדֶּיךָ (your goodness/faithfulness) in verses 2a and 8b forms an inclusion emphasising the goodness of YHWH as the theme of the psalm.

Another favoured poetic technique of Psalm 139 is the extensive use of merisms. In Psalm 138 this poetic technique is employed in verse 6, pointing towards the lowly and the haughty to summarise the full extent of human existence and to point out that all people are subjected to the watchful eye of YHWH.

Form critics have rendered Psalm 139 a psalm exhibiting a mixed form.²²⁹ Within this thought framework, verses 1-18 serves as a prologue to the prayer that is to follow in verses 19-24. When individually classified, verses 1-18 exhibits characteristics of a hymnic preparation, while verses 19-24 displays characteristics of an individual lament. Psalm 138 is most commonly ascribed the *genre* classification of an individual thanksgiving. However, Terrien (2003:871) classifies Psalm 138 as a hymn of gratitude. DeClaissé-Walford *et al* (2014:958) also classify Psalm 138 as an individual hymn of thanksgiving, stating that certain hymnic elements are discernible throughout the psalm. Psalm 138 expresses intent to praise YHWH, followed by an exposition of what it is that prompted this need to praise and finally the psalmist proceeds to actively praise the deeds of YHWH. The basic mood of a psalm of thanksgiving is similar to that of a hymn. Where the former gives thanks to YHWH for an act of deliverance, the latter simply extolls praise for YHWH's general goodness and provision (Belcher, 2008:806-807). On the level of genre, both Psalms 138 and 139 displays hymnic undertones. However, the association of the *genre* classification of Psalm 138 is limited to verses 1-18 of Psalm 139.

²²⁹ See 3.9 for a complete exposition on the *genre* and *Sitz im Leben* of Psalm 139.

The date of composition of both psalms remains unclear for the reason that there are no clear historic markers in either of the psalms that points to a definite historical situation.

It becomes clear that there exists a multitude of points of contact between Psalms 138 and 139. It should however be noted that Psalm 138 also shares multiple connections with its preceding Psalms 135-137. Hossfeld & Zenger (2011:531) suggests that Psalm 138 and Psalm 137 are essentially linked by an exilic situation. The placement of Psalm 137 is in Babylon referring to the exile, and at the same time, Psalm 138 is steered by the notion of a petitioner that is located outside the homeland. It is thus possible to conjecture that Psalm 138 serves as succession and or conclusion to Psalms 135-137.²³⁰

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

Ultimately, Psalm 139 responds to this demand to praise YHWH in verses 1-18.

From an analysis drawn from the content of both Psalms 138 and 139, it becomes apparent that Psalm 139 imitates the same basic structure as that of Psalm 138, except for verses 19-21.

Psalm 138 commences with the praise of YHWH. This praise however presents itself within unique circumstance when the psalmist chooses the place of worship to be ‘in

²³⁰ According to Hossfeld & Zenger (2011:531) Ps. 137 only serves as a transitional psalm that links the Pilgrim Psalter (Pss. 120-136) to the Davidic Psalter (Pss. 138-145).

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

Psalm 139 begins with praise for YHWH's intimate knowledge of the psalmist. The psalmist goes to great lengths to call attention to the fact that there is nowhere to hide from YHWH. YHWH is omnipresent. The psalmist then personalises this knowledge of YHWH by proceeding to illustrate that not even the complexity of the psalmist's creation in the womb is secret to YHWH. Once again, the psalmist bursts into praise and admiration for YHWH's wonderful and fearful creative ways. In a sudden change in tone (vv. 19-22) that is not consistent with the content of Psalm 138, the psalmist sets out against the enemies with an expression of extreme hatred. In verses 23-24 resumes in the same tone of Psalm 138, with a call on YHWH to protect against these perpetrators. The psalm is closed with an expression of confidence in YHWH to triumph over evil and lead the psalmist in the way of the righteous. By doing so, the psalmist affirms trust in YHWH.

The same basic premise can be discerned in both Psalms 138 and 139:

- YHWH is ever-present!
- YHWH is the keeper of the psalmist (who guards against enemies).
- YHWH is worthy to be praised!

4.4.2 Comparative relationship between Psalm 139 and Psalm 140

There is an abundance of similarities that are shared between Psalms 139 and 140. At first, we take a look at the different role-players in these psalms:

Role-players in the psalms:	
Psalm 139	Psalm 140
YHWH (also called El or Elohim [God])	YHWH (also called El or Lord)
I/me (the psalmist)	I/me (the psalmist)
The wicked/godless (also referred to as the enemies of YHWH and the psalmist)	The wicked/man of violence (those opposing the psalmist)

Both Psalms 139 and 140 prefer the use of the proper noun יהוה (YHWH) in reference to the Lord. While Psalm 139 only refers to the Lord as YHWH on three occasions (vv. 1, 4 and 21), Psalm 140 uses the proper noun a total of seven times (vv. 2, 5, 7[x2], 8, 9, 13). It is noticeable that there is a second proper noun used about the Lord, which is shared by both psalms, namely אֱל (God). Twice it occurs in Psalm 139 (vv. 17 and 23) and only once in Psalm 140 (v. 7).

Both Psalms 139 and 140 very clearly displays an “I-you” relationship between the psalmist (the “I”) and YHWH (the “you”). Both psalms are composed in the 1st person singular style, once again attesting to the personal nature of the content of the psalm. In both psalms, the psalmist turns towards YHWH in the presence of enemies. The preservation and protection of YHWH seem to be a shared theme in these psalms.

The presence of antagonists is acknowledged in both psalms. Each of the psalms mentions these enemies, although Psalm 139 mentions them to a lesser extent than Psalm 140. In Psalm 139 we only read about the wicked in verses 19-22 in a very brief description. Here the wicked are described as people who speak evil about and misuse YHWH’s name. By implication, the enemies of YHWH are adopted by the psalmist, as the psalmist now also loath them with extreme hatred. The psalmist expresses the desire for YHWH to finish off these men of blood. In Psalm 140 we learn quite a lot more about the psalmist’s enemies. The psalmist leads, in verse 2, with an appeal to YHWH to be saved against evil men and to be guarded against men of violence. In the rest of the psalm, the psalmist sets out to justify this request by providing a thorough description of the deeds of the wicked. References made to מִלְחָמָה (war) in verse 3 and נִשְׁקָה (battle) in verse 8 implies real danger (Goulder,

1998:250). The psalmist, however, declares confidence in YHWH to provide relief from these attacks.

Psalms 139 and 140 shares three overall themes. The first shared theme between these psalms is most certainly the hope for the destruction of and protection from evil. In Psalm 139 the presence of evil, in the form of רָשָׁע (wicked) people and אֲנָשֵׁי דָמַיִם (men of blood), is briefly bemoaned. The evil that takes place is described as people who speak against YHWH. The psalmist shoots straight from the hip with the request אִם־תִּקַּטֵּל אֱלֹהֵי רָשָׁע (if only, God, you killed the wicked). In this request the psalmist's hope for the destruction of evil becomes evident. In Psalm 140 the psalmist asks to be saved and guarded against רָע מְאֹדִים (evil men) and אִישׁ חֲמוּסִים (men of violence). This petition is echoed again in verses 5 and 12. In verse 12 the psalmist's hope for the destruction of evil becomes evident when it is petitioned that these people must not be established on earth. In both psalms, the psalmist(s) remains grounded in the hope that YHWH would provide deliverance from evil oppressors either in the form of destruction or in the form of protection against such enemies.

Another theme shared by both psalms is the all-encompassing presence of YHWH which is represented by the use of the word פָּנֶיךָ (face). In Psalm 139 the psalmist starts with some extensive merisms which all serve to illustrate that YHWH knows everything about the psalmist. Then, suddenly, the focus of the psalm is shifted from the knowledge of YHWH to the presence of YHWH with two questions in verse 7: "Where do I go from your spirit? And where from your face²³¹ I can flee?" The psalmist then proceeds to answer these questions with yet another series of merisms. In short, the answer to the question (as answered by the psalmist) is: nowhere. There is nowhere to hide from the face/presence of YHWH. YHWH's face/presence is

²³¹ Despite the fact that the face, in the Hebrew Bible, is the billboard of emotions, such as anger, fear, joy, contempt and depression (Kruger, 2005:651), the face also carries the meaning of 'presence.' According to Longman, Ryken & Wilhoit (1998:901-902), when talking about someone's face, it refers to the 'front of' that person. As opposed to what takes place behind a person, that which takes place in front of someone (or in someone's face) happens in that person's sight and presence. When reference is made to the 'face of YHWH' in Pss. 139 and 140, it points to exactly this: the sight/omniscience of YHWH (because YHWH's sees and knows all) and also the presence/omnipresence of YHWH (because nothing can be hidden from YHWH's face).

everywhere – in the heavens, but also Sheol; in the East, but also the West; in the darkness, but also the light; and even in the womb. Psalm 140 also claims the all-encompassing presence of YHWH, but this time it is directed at the moral/just. The psalmist claims that the just will sit before the face of YHWH.²³² The claim is made that the presence of YHWH is reserved for those who abide by the Torah and is morally just and righteous. Whereas Psalm 139 asserts the omnipresence of YHWH, Psalm 140 emphasises that it is a privilege for the righteous to be found in such presence.

A third theme shared by both Psalms 139 and 140 is praise for YHWH from the righteous. In Psalm 139 the psalmist proclaims, without a shred of doubt, that אֹדְרָךְ (I will praise you). The reason for the psalmist's praise is explained: כִּי נֹרְאוֹת נִפְלְיֹתִי (because fearfully I am distinct). The psalmist's amazement is personal. It is as if for the first time, the psalmist realises the intrinsic complexity with which humankind is formed. This astounds the psalmist into praise for YHWH. In Psalm 140 the psalmist postulates, in verse 14, that praise is the function of the righteous. Following the declaration of verse 13, it can be said that the psalmist counts him-/herself amongst the righteous.²³³ Hossfeld & Zenger (2011:553) postulates that in both psalms the praise of the psalmist's is subjected to the psalmist's self-image. This self-image, however, gives rise to a deeper appreciation of YHWH's creativity (Ps. 139) and YHWH's provision and protection (Ps. 140).

The following verbal connections are shared between Psalms 139 and 140:

Verbal connections	Psalm 139:	Psalm 140:
רָשָׁע (wicked)	19	5; 9

²³² Hossfeld & Zenger (2011:553) notes that a similar reference is made in Ps. 11. Here, however, the psalm has a strong cultic background and therefore the psalm is read in the light of the Temple Theology by which the presence of YHWH is limited to the temple. The reference to the just that sit in the presence of YHWH, in Ps. 140, carries no such cultic connection. Instead, Ps. 140 follows the notion modelled by Ps. 139, that the presence (or face) of YHWH is transcendent because God is no longer confined to the confines of the temple. God is universal.

²³³ For Zakovitch (2014:219) the psalmist only expects that the righteous will join the psalmist's song of praise, as if Ps. 140:14 is not based on fact but merely on speculation. This premise is based on the use of the adverb וַיֵּשֶׁר (surely) at the beginning of v. 14.

לָשׁוֹן (tongue)	4	4; 12
יָדַע (to know)	1; 2; 4; 14; 23	13
אַתָּה (you)	2; 8; 13	7
יְדָה (praise)	14	14
קוּם (rise up)	2	11
יָד (hand)	10	4
אָרֶץ (earth)	15	12
לֵב / לִבָּ (heart)	23	3

To obtain an improved comprehension of the comparative relationship shared by Psalms 139 and 140, the verbal connections between the psalms is further examined:

The first verbal contact made between Psalms 139 and 140 that are noteworthy, is their description of their enemies. Both psalms refer to their enemies as רָשָׁע (wicked).²³⁴ The wicked are those who stand in opposition to YHWH. This is made abundantly clear by the psalmist's protest in Psalm 139. The wicked are described as those who detach themselves from YHWH and who opposes YHWH with their intentions and utterances. The psalmist, on the contrary, decides to affiliate with YHWH and thus declares the wicked enemies too. In Psalm 140 the psalmist appeals against the desires of the wicked, which is described in verse 3 as the intent to stir up

²³⁴ Creach (2014:530-539) refer to the terms רָשָׁע (wicked) and צַדִּיק (righteous) as primary categories in the psalms, based on the frequency with which these terms occur in the *Psalter*. These categories serve as descriptions of humankind and more importantly of how human beings stand in relation to YHWH. Throughout the *Psalter* the psalms are usually voiced by the so-called righteous whose lives are, in some way or form affected or threatened by the wicked. In the *Psalter*, the righteous are those who recognise the reign of YHWH. The righteous frequently express dependence on YHWH. The wicked, who stands diametrically opposed to the righteous, refuse to acknowledge YHWH's reign and does not submit to YHWH's sovereignty. This gives rise to destructive and oppressive behaviour which is directed at those who choose to side with YHWH. In return, this gives rise to the righteous' pleas, that can be heard throughout the *Psalter*, to the assistance and mercy of YHWH. Creach (2014:530) emphasise that the righteous should not be understood as people who are legalistically blameless, but rather as people who are dependent on YHWH for protection, people who pleads forgiveness from YHWH and those who choose to worship YHWH in humility. The righteous are those who align themselves with a righteous Deity. The wicked, therefor, are the exact opposite.

war and in verse 6 to entrap the psalmist. Furthermore, to underscore the evilness of the wicked, the psalmist's self-description consists of concepts such as: עָנִי (humble); אֲבִיּוֹן (poor) and צַדִּיק (righteous), terms that are classically associated with those who align themselves with YHWH. Thus, in both Psalms 139 and 140 we find that there are two alliances, entirely opposed to each other, who comes head-to-head. The wicked come with evil and oppressive tactics, while the righteous' only tactic is to submissively praise YHWH and appeal to YHWH's graciousness.

Psalms 139 and 140 further share the use of the word לְשׁוֹן (tongue). The author of Psalm 139 refers to the tongue in personal reference. All the words of the psalmist's tongue are known to YHWH, even before they are spoken. With verse 4 the psalmist declares total transparency. Later on, in verse 20 the wicked is opposed to this transparency when the psalmist emphasises that they who transgress against YHWH do so via speech. This is a notion that only gains momentum in Psalm 140. Here the oppressor(s) are described as אִישׁ לְשׁוֹן (man of tongue)²³⁵ and their tongues are likened to that of a נָחָשׁ (snake) while their words are likened to the חֲמַת עֵכָשׁוּב (poison of a viper). This vivid description of the attack of the wicked exposes their *modus operandi* as defamation. The enemies of the psalmist are slanderers whose aim is to entrap the psalmist. In Psalm 139 the psalmist declares with absolute trust that YHWH knows every word that rolls over the tongue even before it is spoken. Whereas, in Psalm 140 the psalmist appeals to YHWH to also know what is rolling off the tongues of the psalmist's enemies and accordingly, to safeguard the psalmist from such slandering traps.

The verb יָדַע (to know) is indicative of Psalm 139, occurring a total of six times throughout the psalm. The perfect knowledge of YHWH is the recurrent theme that permeates the whole psalm, emphasising that YHWH knows the psalmist's actions and words. In the closing verses of the psalm, the psalmist appeals to this knowledge of YHWH as a means of substantiating innocence. All of a sudden, in Psalm 140, the

²³⁵ Whenever the tongue is characterised as something that is able do harm, it serves as a reminder of the great power that is contained in the tongue (Longman, Ryken & Wilhoit, 1998:876).

tables are turned. Here the psalmist now asserts knowledge of YHWH, claiming that: **יָדַעְתִּי כִּי־יַעֲשֶׂה יְהוָה בִּיּוֹן עֲנִי** (I know he does, YHWH, the lawsuit of the humble). In Psalm 140 the word **יָדַע** (to know) now points to the psalmist's knowledge of a personal God (Hossfeld & Zenger, 2011:553).

Psalms 139 and 140 also share their use of the independent pronoun 2nd person male singular **אַתָּה** (you). In Psalm 139 this pronoun is applied in association with YHWH, pointing to the glorious actions of YHWH. Whereas the same pronoun is used in Psalm 140 to demand YHWH's attention. The psalmist exclaims in verse 7: 'You (YHWH) must listen!'

Another verbal connection shared by both psalms is the use of the verb **קוּם** (rise up). In Psalm 139 the psalmist notes YHWH's knowledge and involvement in the psalmist's basic, everyday tasks. When the psalmist is to sit down, YHWH knows. When the psalmist is to **קוּם** (rise up), again YHWH knows. In Psalm 140, the verb is used, not about the psalmist, but rather the psalmist's enemies. Here the psalmist pleads to YHWH to let the wicked be thrown in the water pits so that they will not again **קוּם** (rise up). It can be asserted that in Psalm 139 the rising up of the psalmist does not offend YHWH in any means, therefore, with YHWH's knowledge of it, it is allowed. However, the rising up of the wicked, in Psalm 140, carries insult. Therefore, it is pleaded that they are thrown in the water pits never again to rise.

Psalms 139 and 140 further relates in their use of the word **יָד** (hand). In Psalm 139 the guiding capacity of YHWH's hand is underlined and YHWH's hand becomes the symbol of intervention in the life of the psalmist. However, in Psalm 140 reference is made to the **מַיְדֵי רָשָׁע** (hands of the wicked). The psalmist pleads with YHWH to be kept from the hands of the wicked. Both a positive and a negative connotation is made with hand(s) in the respective psalms. In Psalm 139 the hand is used to guide. In Psalm 140 the hands are used to ensnare. Nonetheless, in both instances, hand(s) are reminiscent of YHWH's benefaction, for in Psalm 139 YHWH's hand guides and

in Psalm 140 YHWH is the one who ultimately delivers the psalmist from the hands of the wicked.

Both Psalms 139 and 140 refer to the אָרֶץ (earth). In Psalm 139 the psalmist metaphorically relays the story of the psalmist's creation by stating: בְּתַחְתִּיּוֹת אָרֶץ רָקַמְתִּי (I was woven in the lowest of the earth).²³⁶ By implication of the content of verse 13, YHWH is the one doing the weaving/creating, but it is insinuated by the psalmist that he/she was birthed by the earth. This could be a means of claiming proprietorship of the earth. This strengthens the appeal made in Psalm 140:12. Here the psalmist begs YHWH not to allow the wicked יִכּוֹן בְּאֶרֶץ (to be established on the earth).

A final verbal connection that links Psalms 139 and 140 together, is the use of the word לֵב (heart) or its cognate לִבָּב (heart).²³⁷ The final plea the psalmist makes to YHWH is that YHWH may know the psalmist's heart. According to Goodwin (1881:67-68), the heart was broadly understood as the origins of thoughts. The psalmist thus appeals to YHWH to examine the psalmist's thoughts and intentions. However bold it is of the psalmist to make such an invading request, the psalmist must have been convinced of his/her purity of heart. For Zakovitch (2014:219) the author of Psalm 139 is confident in the psalmist's guiltlessness and thus invites YHWH to search the heart. To the contrary, the author of Psalm 140 does not offer up his/her own heart for scrutiny but instead chooses to expose what the psalmist believes to be the content of the enemies' heart, namely רָעָה (evil).

With regard to the analysis of poetic techniques employed in both psalms, it is notable that both Psalms 139 and 140 share a preference for the use of parallelisms and

²³⁶ Allen (2002:329) indicates that the psalmist is speaking of his/her own creation in primeval terms, alluding to the Mother Earth theory (Anderson, 1972:910) which views the earth as a womb - an entity that gives birth. Cf. Job 1:21.

²³⁷ In the twenty-first century we distinguish between the heart as the seat of our emotions and our mind as the seat of our rationality. However, in the Ancient Near East the heart was descriptive of the complete inner-world of mankind. Goodwin (1881:67) infers that the heart exhibits itself in all the activities of the human being, such as: in desires; affections; emotions; thoughts; beliefs and reasoning.

chiasms to emphasise YHWH's care and protection of the psalmist. A comparable example is that of the chiasm formed in Psalm 139:10 that emphasise the psalmist's request for YHWH's protection and guidance in comparison to the chiasm formed in Psalm 140:2 and 5 that highlights the urgency of the psalmist's request for protection.

A form-critical analysis of Psalm 139 exposes two different tones in the psalm. This is dealt with by assigning each undertone a separate *genre*. Consequently, Psalm 139 separated into the following two *genre* categories: verses 1-18 is categorised as a hymn while verses 19-24 is categorised as an individual lament. There is general agreement amongst scholars that Psalm 140 exhibits all the traits of a lament. Whether it is an individual lament or a communal lament is still under debate. Nonetheless, the primary character of a lament is the bewailing of a dire situation such as the attack of enemies, which is a discernible aspect throughout Psalm 140. In Psalm 140 a distinct plea for deliverance is seen. However, the celebratory nature of the closing verses that applauds the assistance of YHWH as if it was already received, creates a hymnic undertone in the psalm (Terrien, 2003:883). Though it should be conceded that Psalm 140 defies the traditional description of a lament with the celebration in the final verses, it must also be stated that the overall tone of the psalm is lamenting in nature. Thus, when comparing the genres of Psalms 139 and 140 it becomes clear that both psalms display characteristics of a lament of some sorts. However, the association of the *genre* classification of Psalm 140 is limited to verses 19-24 of Psalm 139.

Both Psalm 139 and 140 are unclear on who authored it and the date of composition, due to a general lack of historical markers in the text.

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

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

verses, the focus is placed on the psalmist's disassociation with the perpetrators and the psalmist willingly siding with YHWH and just/righteousness.

In Psalm 140 verses 1-12 the predominant theme is a call on YHWH for deliverance from enemies. The psalmist portrays him-/herself being pestered by violent men and calls out to YHWH to come to the rescue. The psalmist also asks for the downfall of the psalmist's enemies. Only the last two verses of Psalm 140 (vv. 13-14) is dedicated to praising YHWH for righteousness. The psalmist chooses to conclude the petition against the wicked by asserting his/her righteousness. It is emphasised that nothing goes unseen by the eyes of YHWH. The psalmist reverting to praise, claims that as a just and righteous person the psalmist lives in the face/presence of YHWH.

Based on the above comparison between Psalms 139 and 140, it can be surmised that there exists an assortment of connections, thematic and verbal, between the two psalms linking them together to an extent. The most important point of contact shared is both psalms attitude towards the wicked/enemies and the stance that the psalmist(s) takes against evil.

4.5 Synthesis

In chapter 4 the primary focus was an inter-textual analysis of Psalm 139 in which Psalm 139 is compared to the psalms immediately adjacent to it, i.e. the foregoing Psalm 138 and the following Psalm 140. This inter-textual study aimed to discern the textual relationships that exist between Psalm 139 and its neighbouring psalms. To successfully compare Psalm 139 with its bordering psalms, first, a literary-exegetical study of both Psalms 138 and 140 were respectively done. This formed the groundwork for a comparative study between Psalms 138 and 139 as well as Psalms 139 and 140, respectively. In this chapter, the texts at hand were approached on both a synchronic as well as a diachronic level.

A literary-exegetical study of Psalm 138 exposed a unique situation of praise. The psalmist dedicates him-/herself to praise YHWH and the psalmist then discloses the place of worship as 'in front of gods.' Although scholars do not agree on the meaning of this phrase, what becomes abundantly clear is the unrestricted nature of the praise.

The psalmist wants his/her praises to be made public. An additional role-player to that of the three role-players which also feature in Psalm 139 comes into play in Psalm 138. These additional role-players are the kings of the earth. In the brief acknowledgement given to these characters, they are ascribed a very important function that ultimately guides the reader in a better understanding of the possible background that gave rise to this unique composition. The kings of the earth are ascribed the function of praise. The worship, which was initiated by the psalmist, progresses to the kings of foreign nations and thus the glory of YHWH becomes universally known. This action of the kings, who joins in the praises of YHWH, is directly opposed to the actions of the psalmist's so-called enemies, which is also only briefly mentioned. These enemies fail in joining in the exaltation and adoration of YHWH and thus undermines the Lordship of YHWH, therefore they are only observed by YHWH from afar. From this we deduct that intimacy with YHWH is reserved for those who are willing to publicly praise YHWH. The psalmist briefly mentions that YHWH is acquainted with the human condition, implying that YHWH knows the heart of the one who dares to worship YHWH. Finally, the psalmist closes this song with an affirmation of YHWH's goodness coupled with a prayer for fortification in future endeavours. The goodness of YHWH becomes the basis on which the psalm is built. The goodness of YHWH gives rise to praises which extends far across the borders of one single city or country.

In contrast to Psalm 138, a literary-exegetical analysis of Psalm 140 uncovers a strong sense of opposition. In Psalm 140 these so-called wicked or evil-intentioned men are more extensively referenced than YHWH or the psalmist. This magnification of the role of the antagonists can be seen in the repetition of phrases such as 'men of violence' and 'wicked'. This repetition serves to underline the relentlessness with which the psalmist is pursued and attacked. In contrast to this relentless pursuit of the psalmist, the psalmist's plea to YHWH resounds throughout the whole of the psalm with phrases such as: 'save me'; 'guard me' and 'keep me'. This underlines the persecution versus protection theme which is seen throughout Psalm 140. The violence of the attackers is described most peculiarly: they concoct evil motives in their hearts and stir up conflicts, all day long, with their venomous tongues. The enemies of the psalmist are likened to poisonous snakes, implying that the attack on the psalmist is verbal in nature. The psalmist, however, employs prayer as a counter-attack – turning to the aid

of the omnipotent YHWH. At first, the psalmist confesses trust in YHWH and then the psalmist pleads for the demise of these enemies. The justice to which the psalmist appeals is poetic in nature, for the psalmist asks that that which the enemies planned may befall themselves. Finally, amidst this prayer of despair, the psalmist still finds the time to praise YHWH for YHWH's righteousness. The psalmist finishes this song with a statement that YHWH will side with the meek and the virtuous.

When comparing Psalms 138 and 139, the many similarities shared by the psalms indicates a strong literary relationship. Except for the kings of the earth, the role-players of the psalms correlate. In both psalms, a strong "I-you" relationship reveals the psalmist(s) dependence on YHWH. Furthermore, the duality of YHWH is expressed in both Psalms 138 and 139. Emphasis is placed on a hypothetical distance between YHWH and mankind, which underlines the sovereignty of YHWH, while simultaneously underlining the creative participation of YHWH in the lives of individuals. This underscores the theme of the universality of YHWH that can be discerned in both psalms. While Psalm 138 makes the deeds of YHWH universally known, Psalm 139 contemplates what the universality of YHWH means for the individual. Both Psalms 138 and 139 share an underlying tone of thankfulness which ultimately results in praises for YHWH's provision and creative deeds. The psalms also share the concept of eternity. Where Psalm 138 claims that the goodness of YHWH will last for eternity, Psalm 139 petitions YHWH for guidance in 'the way everlasting.' The connection between Psalms 138 and 139 is further coloured by the wide array of verbal connections shared.

It is striking when comparing the basic moods of Psalms 138 and 139. The basic mood of Psalm 139:1-18 is that of a hymn. A hymn extolls praise for YHWH's general goodness and provision. On the other side, the basic mood of Psalm 138 is thanksgiving. A song of thanksgiving gives thanks to YHWH for an act of deliverance. These two *genre* classifications, that of a hymn and a song of thanksgiving, overlap in the praise that is given to YHWH. This is where Psalms 138 and 139 coincide. It should, however, be noted again that only verses 1-18 of Psalm 139 correlates to the basic mood and tone of Psalm 138.

Finally, Psalms 138 and 139 share the same basic premise: both psalms speak to the detail of YHWH's universality; both psalms appeal to YHWH for guarding against enemies; and both psalms are set out to praise YHWH.

When comparing Psalms 139 and 140, again an abundance of similarities is exposed. However, these similarities differ greatly from that which is shared between Psalms 138 and 139. Here, again, we see a very distinct "I-you" relationship between the psalmist and YHWH. The role-players are the same for both psalms. However, where the focus falls on YHWH in Psalm 139, the focus shifts toward the enemies and their relentless pursuit of the psalmist in Psalm 140. Psalms 139 and 140 share three overall themes. First, in both psalms, the psalmist(s) is very expressive about their hope for the destruction of and protection from evil. Second, in both psalms, the all-encompassing presence of YHWH is mentioned and celebrated. Third, both psalms represent praise for YHWH from the righteous. Furthermore, the connection between Psalms 139 and 140 is strengthened by an abundance of verbal connections.

Psalm 140 exhibits characteristics of a lament. In Psalm 140 the psalmist bewails his/her enemies and their merciless attacks. Furthermore, a distinct plea for deliverance from these enemies can be heard throughout the psalm. When compared with the content of Psalm 139 a conspicuous correlation can be made with the content of verses 19-24. Form-critically Psalm 139 exposes the traits of an individual lament in verses 19-24. Thus, both psalms display characteristics of a lament. However, it should be noted that the correlation drawn between these psalms is primarily focused on the content of verses 19-24 of Psalm 139.

Based on the comparison made between Psalms 138 and 139, as well as Psalms 139 and 140, it was seen in this chapter that Psalm 139 correlates to its predecessor primarily based on praise. The greater part of Psalm 139 focus on praise for YHWH's omniscience, omnipresence and omnipotence (vv. 1-18). Throughout these verses, the psalmist creatively illustrates YHWH's care and provision by emphasising the fact that the psalmist is never out of the sight and mind of YHWH. Also, this chapter further revealed that Psalm 139 correlates to its following psalm primarily based on the bewailing of enemies. Only a few verses in Psalm 139 is dedicated to the enemies. In verses 19-24 the psalmist mentions hate for the enemies and then calls on YHWH to

defeat the enemies. The psalmist wilfully disassociates with the wicked, which in turn associates the psalmist with the just and the righteous. In this chapter, it becomes evident that the first eighteen verses of Psalm 139 enter into conversation with the preceding Psalm 138, while the final six verses of Psalm 139 enter into conversation with Psalm 140.

CHAPTER 5

PSALM 139 AND THE FINAL DAVIDIC *PSALTER* (PSS. 138-145)

5.1 Introduction

Chapter 5 focuses on the greater unit of the psalms in which Psalm 139 is embedded. In psalm studies, our focus is shifted from a form-critical and cult-functional approach to the psalms to an approach where the editorial organisation of the *Psalter* is valued (Wilson, 1984:337) and questions concerning the arrangement and structuring of the psalms are attended (Howard, 1993:54). We emerge from an age where the dominated discourse on the psalms was defined by the words of Gunkel (1998:2) stating that: “*No internal ordering principle for the individual psalms has been transmitted for the whole.*” As we step into a new age, scholarship has recognised method in the proverbial madness that is the *Psalter*. Instead of studying psalms as isolated entities, scholarship now recognises individual psalms as part of a larger whole. The internal arrangement of psalms is no longer considered to be the consequence of an unintentional juxtaposition, but rather of organisational reasoning. Consequently, to obtain a comprehensive understanding of a psalm, it is not sufficient to simply study the psalm in isolation. Therefore, when inquiring into a single psalm, as in this study, due regard must be afforded to the redactional groups of which such a psalm forms a part.

In the preceding chapter, the literary relationship shared between Psalm 139 and its direct neighbouring psalms (Pss. 138 and 140) was explored. Based on a literary analysis of Psalm 138 and 140, as well as a comparative study between the features of these texts and that of Psalm 139, the textual and theological relationship between these texts were analysed. The aim of the foregoing chapter centres around the question of how Psalm 139 enters into conversation with its direct neighbouring texts. The present chapter builds on this knowledge by inquiring into the relationship that Psalm 139 shares with the greater unit of psalms of which it forms a part.

The greater unit of which Psalm 139 forms a part of is Psalms 138-145, also known as the final davidic *Psalter*. In this chapter, the literary relationship that exists between Psalm 139 and the rest of the final davidic *Psalter* is assessed. To better understand the positioning of Psalm 139, in the final davidic *Psalter*, the composition and redactional grouping of Psalms 138-145 will be investigated. Furthermore, in this chapter, attention will be given to the semantic profile of the last davidic collection. In addition, this study will attempt to discern a theological outline of Psalms 138-145 to better understand the theological framework within which the content of Psalm 139 acquires form and meaning.

This chapter aims to further investigate Psalm 139, at the hands of recent trends in Psalm studies, which indicates that the current form of the *Psalter*, as it is found in the Hebrew Bible, is the result of editorial organisation. The objective of the current chapter is to inquire into the internal arrangement of the final davidic *Psalter* to investigate the placement of Psalm 139 within this particular collection and to discern the relations if indeed there are any, that binds Psalm 139 in an editorial unit with Psalms 138-145.

In this chapter, the internal arrangement of the final davidic *Psalter* will be scrutinised to detect repetitive semantic influences. Furthermore, a theological profile of Psalms 138-145 will reveal the theological discourse of this particular collection. In turn, Psalm 139 will be related to these semantic and theological themes to discern how it fits into the final davidic *Psalter*. This study ventures to highlight the interconnectedness of the textual and theological features of the final davidic *Psalter*, and to understand the ambiguous nature of Psalm 139 in the light of these features. This chapter aims to provide an answer to the question: What is the purpose of the positioning of Psalm 139 in the final davidic *Psalter*, and how does it shape our understanding of the controversial nature of this text?

5.2 Composition and redactional grouping of the final davidic *Psalter*

Where once the *Psalter* was merely considered an assortment of songs and prayers which were used in the religious life of ancient Israel, a so-called hymnbook, scholarship now recognise that the *Psalter* has a shape and that this shape conveys

meaning.²³⁸ DeClaissé-Walford (2006:456) refers to the *Psalter* as a narrative embedded in poetic texts. Research has confirmed a five-part division²³⁹ of the *Psalter*. Like scenes of a play, these five ‘acts’ each portrays an important part of Israelite history. While Wilson (1993:72) focuses our attention on the conclusion of each of the five acts,²⁴⁰ DeClaissé-Walford (1997:6-8) maintains that the best place to start is at the beginning of each act. Between Wilson’s doxologies and DeClaissé-Walford’s introductions to each of the five books of the *Psalter*, the scholarship is gifted with a comprehensive conception of the *Psalter*’s plot.

In short, the narrative of the *Psalter* can be summed up, as follows:

Psalms 1 and 2 introduces the storyline of the *Psalter*. In these psalms, the reader is acquainted with the theology of the ‘two ways’: the way of the righteous (Ps. 1:1-3) and the way of the wicked (Ps. 1:4-5). The first entails the observance of the Torah and holds the promise of a fruitful and blessed life. The second entails a life in contravention of the Torah which results in destruction. These psalms’ shared theme familiarise the reader with the *leitmotif* of the entire *Psalter*: אֲשֶׁרִי כָּל-חֹסֵי (blessed are all who seek refuge with God).²⁴¹ This introduction sets a covenantal frame from which the rest of the *Psalter* gains meaning in the light of the Torah.²⁴² Following this

²³⁸ Wilson (1992:129) maintains that, when studying the *Psalter* or any part of it, one should be on the lookout for any indicators that communicate shape. After discerning shape, one should inquire into the significance of the communicated shape.

²³⁹ While scholars remain uncertain as to when the five-part division of the *Psalter* was introduced, the earliest reference to this five-part division can be found in the *Midrash Tehillim* which were codified in the 9th century BCE (Bullock, 2001:58).

²⁴⁰ The concluding doxologies of each of the five books of the *Psalter* is as follows: Book I (Pss. 1-41) – Ps. 41:13; Book II (Pss. 42-72) – Ps. 72:18-19; Book III (Pss. 73-89) – Ps. 89:52; Book IV (Pss. 90-106) – Ps. 106:48; Book V (Pss. 107-150) – Pss. 146-150. The doxology to the fifth book is also the doxology to the entire *Psalter*.

²⁴¹ DeClaissé-Walford (2006:456) suggest that the Hebrew אֲשֶׁרִי word usually translated with “blessed” is better translated with the word “content”.

²⁴² There exists a close connection between the Torah and the *Psalter*, since the time of its final redaction. This conspicuous bond stretches as far back as the 1st century BCE where it is noted in the *Midrash Tehillim* that the five books of the *Psalter* are a reflection of the five books of the Torah (Braude, 1959:5-6). Just as Moses has gifted the Israelites with five books that serve the purpose of instructing them through their lives, so David as replicated this act in the form of the five books of the *Psalter*, thus implicating that the *Psalter* took its form from the Torah. It has been argued that the *Psalter* came to its recent form due to parallel reading of the psalms with the triennial cycle of the Torah pericope. Wilson (1986:85-94) refutes this assertion by stating that no evidence is presented to affirm that the psalms were read alongside the Torah as part of a scheduled lectionary and even if this was the case, it cannot

Torah-oriented introduction, Books I and II start by commemorating the flourishing pre-exilic kingdom, united under the reign of kings David and Solomon – a time when the Torah was heeded with the needed reverence. Book III bewails the tragedy of the divided kingdom, the oppression suffered under the respective regimes of Assyria and Babylon, and the fall of all that once was a flourishing kingdom - a result of disregard for the Torah. Book IV offers a recollection of the Babylonian exile and the Israelite's experiences in captivity – the consequence of disregarding the Torah. Book V relates the nations return from exile and a post-exilic life – a life skewed from the median and challenged to radically new ways of being. In the closing book of the *Psalter*, the Diaspora is awakened to a remembrance of the 'two ways' and the importance of the Torah. Last, the narrative of the *Psalter* is concluded with a final call to praise YHWH in Psalms 146-150.

This meta-narrative of the Hebrew *Psalter* that can be traced throughout the five books, is further divided into smaller collections. These smaller collections, also known as "local-narratives" (DeClaissé-Walford, 2006:457), serves the purpose of further shaping and colouring the relevant books.

Psalm 139 is located in the final davidic *Psalter* (Pss. 138-145) which in turn is located in Book V of the *Psalter*. Wilson (1993:72) upholds that divisions in the *Psalter* can be observed through the presence of doxologies, the use of 'royal psalms' at the seams of collections and through alteration in author and genre designations. As a rule of thumb, these organisational principles hold true for the first three books of the *Psalter*. As later additions to the canonical *Psalter*, Books IV and V do not fully comply with these principles.²⁴³ In these books, collections of psalms are primarily marked by the use of the verbs הלל (*hll*) and ידה (*ydh*). These so-called 'hallelujah'- and 'praise'-psalms serve as markers indicating which psalms should be grouped and read

be proven that this is what inspired the *Psalter's* current shape. The fact that the *Psalter* upholds the Torah as the chosen way of life, does not dictate its shape and/or significance.

²⁴³ Wilson, 1993:73.

together.²⁴⁴ A three-part division of Book V is suggested by Wilson (1993:78-79) and can be illustrated as follows:²⁴⁵

Section 1: Psalms 107-117

- *ydh*-psalm: Psalm 107
- Davidic group: Psalms 108-110
- *hll*-psalms: Psalm 111-117

Section 2: Psalms 118-135

- *ydh*-psalm: Psalm 118
- Torah-psalm: Psalm 119
- Psalms of ascents: Psalms 120-134
- *hll*-psalm: Psalm 135

Section 3: Psalms 136-145

- *ydh*-psalms: Psalms 136-137
- Davidic group: Psalms 138-145

Section 3 is followed by the final *Hallel*. Psalms 146-150, a group of *hll*-psalms, is considered the conclusion, not only of Book V but of the entire *Psalter*. Nevertheless, it fits into the pattern of praise-psalms, followed by edifying psalms, which again is followed by hallelujah-psalms. A concise pattern apparent through all three sections of Book V.

From the above-mentioned exposition of Book V, it is clear that Psalms 138-145, which forms the focus of this chapter, is widely accepted as a separate, edifying collection. The circumference of this collection of psalms, also known as the final davidic *Psalter*, is principally determined by its davidic superscripts and simultaneously by its neighbouring psalms.

²⁴⁴ Cf. Pss. 111:1; 112:1; 113:1, 9; 115:18; 116:19; 117:2; 135:1, 21. The hallelujah has also thoroughly saturated the final Hallel of the entire *Psalter*. Here it can be seen in Pss. 146:1, 10; 147:1, 20; 148:1, 14; 149:1, 9 and 150:1, 6 (Zenger, 1998:77).

²⁴⁵ See Zenger (1998:83) for a visual demonstration of this exposition of the fifth book of the *Psalter*.

i. *David in Book V of the Psalter*

It is important to note, from the outset that davidic superscripts do not necessarily imply davidic authorship.²⁴⁶ Superscripts in the *Psalter* have long been the subject of disagreement amongst scholars.²⁴⁷ Owing to its later addition to the psalms, some scholars disregard its hermeneutical importance. Nevertheless, an argument can be made that within a redactional framework, psalm titles serve as reasonable guidelines to discern groups and collections of psalms in the *Psalter* (Longman, 2014:24). Even though psalm titles were not assigned by the original authors/composers of the psalms and even though it was most likely only added before the end of the canonical period,²⁴⁸ it remains the work of an editor. Therefore, although psalm titles were not part of the original compositions, they provide meaningful insight into the editorial process to which the *Psalter* was subjected as well as the redactional narrative intended to be conveyed. Psalm titles remain vital in comprehending the *Psalter* in its final form (Ramantswana, 2011:438).

How then should we understand the David of the psalms? Are the psalms attributed to him the product of the historical David? Or are the psalms perhaps reflective of historical events in the life of David? Mays (1986:155) points out that there is an undeniable association of David with the psalms throughout the Old Testament, the hermeneutical effects of which cannot be refuted. For Nogalski (2001:169) the connections made to David and historical events in the life of David is only made to

²⁴⁶ It is argued by some that the psalms containing the phrase לְדָוִד (for/of David) originally belonged to a collection of psalms that were originally authored by David (Fraser, 1984:46). With the editing of the *Psalter*, it is believed, that these psalms were selectively placed in the five books to support the narrative and/or theological message of the *Psalter*. This theory is primarily based on the narrative of 1 Sam. 16:16-23 relating how David, who was skilled in the lyre, made music to the possessed Saul. In 2 Sam. David is characterised as וְנָעִים זִמְרוֹת יִשְׂרָאֵל (the sweet psalmist of Israel). However, appealing the argument may seem, Fraser (1984:47) points out that if the song related in 2 Sam. 22 is listed in the Psalms (Ps. 18) and attributed to davidic authorship, it should be questioned why Psalms 95, 105 and 106 (attributed to davidic authorship in 2 Chr. 16) does not consists of titles ascribing them to David. This attests to the fact that even with superscripts assigning psalms to David, davidic authorship cannot always be implied (Gerstenberger, 2001:253).

²⁴⁷ For an exposition on the role and function of psalm titles, see James Fraser's 'The authenticity of the *Psalter* titles.'

²⁴⁸ Longman (2014:24) is of the opinion that psalm titles were assigned to the psalms by the editors who were responsible for the final organisation of the Book of Psalms.

substantiate the narrative of the *Psalter* at its various stages, rendering the narrative of the *Psalter* and the character of David more suitable for use in communal worship. This point of view reduces David to nothing more than a model for worship. Rentdorff (2005:53) reckons that the question at hand should rather be: What kind of David is portrayed in the *Psalter*? He continues to answer this question with three ‘types’ of David that is displayed throughout the *Psalter*: the anointed David, the messianic David and the refugee David.²⁴⁹ This point of view renders David nothing more than a beacon of hope in God, reducing the theological importance of the *Psalter* to just as much. Jung (2016:3) illustrates that the David of the *Psalter* is not the historical figure, but rather a literary character that assumes different *personas* throughout its narrative. For Jung David is a “*literary speaker as part of the literary world of the psalms.*”²⁵⁰ This viewpoint portrays David as the identifiable character of the *Psalter* to which readers can relate throughout their trials and victories. Through renditions of persecution and fortification, the character of David becomes more than a figure of hope, he becomes a role model and exemplar in faith.

Psalms 139 forms part of a collection of psalms grouped by a superscript that connects these eight psalms to the same designated author and/or character.²⁵¹ Without exception, all eight psalms in the fifth and final davidic *Psalter* contains the phrase לְדָוִד (for/of David). And yet, this is not the only psalms in Book V to contain davidic designations. Other psalms which are attributed to David in Book V, include: Psalms 108-110; 122; 124; 131; 133. To encounter the name of David in the psalms is, at the very least, anticipated. Of the one hundred sixteen psalms that contain superscripts, seventy-three of them is assigned to David, making David the “favourite figure” (Ramantswana, 2011:455) of the entire *Psalter*. It can be said that the regulating factor in the editing of the *Psalter* is nothing other than the character of David. To encounter David in Book V is, however, odd. To fully comprehend the peculiarity of David’s

²⁴⁹ Rentdorff, 2005:63.

²⁵⁰ Jung, 2016:3.

²⁵¹ Of the 150 psalms in the Masoretic Psalter, 116 contains superscripts. These superscripts range in the information that is provided (Lama, 2004:1). Some provide information on the author/composer. Several enlightens the reader with information as pertaining to the historical setting of the psalm. Some contain certain musical information suggesting how the psalm should be performed. A few make suggestions on the liturgical setting in which the psalm would function. Other assign the psalm to a category which classifies the nature of the psalm.

resurgence in Book V of the *Psalter*, it will be benefitting to start with the characters/*personas* that David assumes in the redaction of the *Psalter*.

Assisting the reader in navigating the editorial purpose and consequently the narrative of the *Psalter* is the 'royal psalms' (Pss. 2, 72, 89)²⁵² which was resolutely placed at the seams of the first three books (Wilson, 1986:85-91). It is argued, based on the presence of these 'royal psalms', that the *Psalter* can be divided into two main segments. The first segment consists of Psalms 2-89.²⁵³ Psalm 2 introduces this segment by referencing the establishment of the davidic covenant (Wilson, 2005:391) and continues by celebrating the davidic covenant²⁵⁴ and the divine support that sustained it. In the first and second books, David features prominently as the vessel through which YHWH's covenant is realised for all of Israel. The *persona* David assumes is that of the righteous king (Jung, 2016:61). Book II closes with the Solomonic psalm stating that: "*This concludes the prayers of David son of Jesse*" (Ps. 72:20). David is no more. Nevertheless, the blessing which comes through the davidic covenant continues through David's descendant, aka Solomon.²⁵⁵ In Book III there is a drastic change in tone. The kingdom that once flourished under the blessings of the davidic covenant is torn apart and suffers oppression, which culminates in exile. The *persona* that David (or the davidic descendant) assumes, here, is that of the defender of the impoverished and the destitute (Jung, 2016:100). The first segment of the *Psalter* is closed with criticism against YHWH for the collapse of the davidic kingdom (Ps. 89:39-46) and an appeal to YHWH to remain faithful to the house of David (Ps. 89:48-52). Here we encounter the end of what was the davidic empire. It should be noted that Books I-III do not represent the reader of the *Psalter* with a historical retrospective, instead, it should be understood as an exilic collection, written with the

²⁵² Gunkel & Begerich (1998:99) lists eleven psalms as royal psalms: Pss. 2; 18; 20; 21; 45; 72; 89:47-52; 101; 110; 132; 144:1-11. Bellinger (2012:111-112) holds that 'royal psalms' are not a literary type in the strict sense of the word, as 'royal psalms' are not classified based on literary characteristics of the psalm, but rather on the presence of the king in the psalm. A psalm can thus belong to a specific *genre* and *Sitz im Leben*, and still be classified as a 'royal psalm' based on its references to the king. Because the king held such an important position in the life of the worshipping community, it makes sense to separately classify and consider these psalms.

²⁵³ Wilson (2005:391) deduces that the first segment of the *Psalter* (i.e. Books I-III) was editorially reworked during the exile as a response to the loss of the davidic monarchy.

²⁵⁴ Cf. 2 Sam. 7.

²⁵⁵ Cf. 2 Sam. 7:12.

purpose to cultivate hope for the re-establishment of the davidic kingdom (Wilson, 2005:393).

The second segment of the *Psalter* does not consist of any 'royal psalms' at its seams. By inference, the celebration of all that is David and the empire he has built has come to an abrupt end. An end riddled with uncertainties and questions. The יהוה מלך (YHWH reigns) psalms in Book IV, which include Psalms 93 and 95-99, indicates an alteration in focus away from human kingship to the kingship of YHWH (Wilson, 2005:392). What is more, is the fact that Book IV is riddled with Mosaic and Exodus themes.²⁵⁶ Amidst their uncertain situation, the exilic community grabs hold of something that predates the davidic covenant. This substantiates the theory that the nation that once rejected YHWH as their King²⁵⁷ and demanded an earthly king,²⁵⁸ the same nation that did not heed the prophet Samuel's warnings about the fallibility of earthly kingship, this nation now once again put their confidence in the Sinaitic covenant which is first and foremost defined by the Torah. In Book IV a reversion and reevaluation of kingship and covenant are perceptible.

Despite the almost complete absence of David in Book IV, David's presence resurfaces in Book V.²⁵⁹ Of the forty-four psalms comprising this book, fifteen exhibit davidic superscripts. Furthermore, Psalm 132 focuses on the davidic kingship and monarchy, the heading of Psalm 142 refers to a historical event in the early days of David's life and David is also found in the *corpus* of Psalm 144. The magnitude of David's presence in Book V raises the questions: What does the recurrence of David, in the concluding chapters of the canonical *Psalter*, intend to convey?

²⁵⁶ Cf. Tate (1990:452-453).

²⁵⁷ 1 Sam. 8:7.

²⁵⁸ 1 Sam. 8:19.

²⁵⁹ The presence of David in Book V is particularly striking when comparing the canonical Hebrew *Psalter* with that of the Septuagint (LXX) *Psalter* and the Qumran Psalm Scrolls (11QPs^a). Wilson (2005:401) states that several psalms that are unnamed or anonymous in the canonical Hebrew *Psalter*, have been given davidic superscripts in the LXX *Psalter*. By increasing the appearance of David, the davidic undertone of the LXX *Psalter* is emphasised and the character of David is given more prominence. In his comparative study, Wilson (1997:450-451) further illustrates that the Qumran community lauded David even further. The 11QPs^a includes unknown compositions to the canonical Hebrew *Psalter* and ascribes it to David's pen. Furthermore, this canon includes a special prose opus that esteems David as creative author who composed the psalms from divine inspiration.

A closer look at David's resurgence in Book V, ultimately reveals the motive.

Psalms 107 points to the dawn of a new day for the people of YHWH. Where the fourth book was dominated by the exile and a reversion back to the Sinaitic covenant, Psalm 107 presents the reader with the end of the exile. The rest of the fifth book follows in shaping the part of the narrative where Israel and Zion are restored.²⁶⁰

There are two main collections of davidic psalms in Book V of the *Psalter*: Psalms 108-110 and Psalms 138-145. Creach (1996:100-101) advises that to understand the two davidic collections in Book V, the psalms foregoing these collections must be taken into consideration, as these collections serve as a response to concerns raised in the psalms that precede it. In the case of Psalms 108-110, the preceding psalm that needs to be considered is Psalm 107. Psalm 107 opens with the call to praise YHWH. Here we find a celebration of YHWH's goodness and everlasting love. The psalm concludes by cautioning the wise to keep in mind all the goodness and love that YHWH has shown them. Following this counsel, is the first davidic corpus in Book V. In Psalms 108-110, a "trilogy of war and renewed honour" as coined by Sutton (2015:22), David is the depicted character that heeds the warning of Psalm 107. In Psalm 108 David is found in a solemn state of mind. We hear his cry: "*Is it not you, God, you who have rejected us and no longer go out with our armies? Give us aid against the enemy, for human help is worthless*" (vv. 12 and 13). Perhaps an admittance, placed in the mouth of David, to the fallibility of the davidic kingship? Still, amidst his distress, we see David committing to praise YHWH (vv. 1-5).²⁶¹ Even during David's revolt against his enemies, in Psalm 109, where David experiences total desolation, he continues in YHWH's praises. Wallace (2014:199) points out that even though Psalm 109 is filled with imprecatory language, the word *טוֹב* (goodness) is used a total of four times.²⁶² All four times this word is used in a manner that displays YHWH's capacity to grant or withhold goodness. This is crucial for our understanding of how David is portrayed in the final book of the *Psalter*. David commits to praising YHWH, even though YHWH no longer aids him (Ps. 108:12) and even though YHWH chooses to remain silent (Ps.

²⁶⁰ Since the following chapter will focus on the compilation and redaction of Book V of the *Psalter*, this chapter's inquiry into Book V will be limited to the davidic presence in the book.

²⁶¹ Ps. 108 is an amalgamation between Ps. 57:7-11 (Ps. 108:1-6) and Ps. 60:5-12 (Ps. 108:7-14).

²⁶² Cf. Pss. 109:12, 16, 21, 26.

109:1). David's appeals to the goodness of YHWH is not simply a prayer to be granted kindness and favour, but rather an appeal to YHWH's "covenantal loyalty" (Wallace, 2014:200). Here David is the voice appealing to the remembrance of the davidic covenant – a time when YHWH fought Israel's battles and YHWH's voice was heard through the prophets.

In Psalm 110, a royal psalm, we are faced, with what seems to be the reinstatement of David as king, as he is invited to take a seat at YHWH's right hand (v. 1) and later on YHWH is taking the position on David's right hand leading David in battle and restoring David's honour. Hossfeld & Zenger (2011:539-579) positions that this imagination of David should not be regarded as similar to the portrayal of the ideal king in Books I and II of the *Psalter*. Instead, the depiction of David in Psalm 110 should be understood as a revived version of David – a new David. In support of this notion is the fact that David is no longer depicted as the mighty king he once was. David is no longer referred to by his royal titles. The titles afforded to him now includes: עֶבֶד (servant) and מְשִׁיחַ (anointed one). Psalm 110 portrays David as a כֹּהֵן (priest) in the order of Melchizedek. From the use of this abridged designations, it is clear that a role reversal is taking place in Book V. David now assumes, what seems to be a lesser role, but which is the biggest role he is yet to play in this narrative of the *Psalter*. Where David's kingship was always equated with divine support, now divine kingship is associated with davidic patronage. David becomes the model for an attitude of dependence and trust in YHWH (Howard, 1993:52). Although his election is still underlined, his appointment is no longer to a position of power, but rather to a position of servitude. Through this role reversal, David becomes "the prototypical figure of hope" (Hossfeld & Zenger, 2011:3) for the post-exilic community.

Before we jump to the final davidic *Psalter*, proper consideration must be afforded to another royal psalm, Psalm 132, as it plays a cardinal role in our understanding of what place and purpose David takes on in the fifth book of the *Psalter*. The collection of *šir hama'ālōt* psalms (Pss. 120-134) of which Psalm 132 forms part of, converses the post-exilic community's pilgrimage from exile (Ps. 120) to Zion (Ps. 134). This collection was creatively shaped to communicate the post-exilic community's newfound royal and Zion theology - a theology that centres around three themes

(Human, 2009:68): Jerusalem (Pss. 120-124), the temple (Pss. 125-129) and David (Pss. 130-134). Central to the part of the collection that explains the current place of David (or the davidic lineage) in this royal and Zion theology, is Psalm 132. Form-critically, Psalm 132 is divided into two equal parts of which the first is a petition and the second is a divine reply. From this petition and divine reply, two fundamental ideas arise: First, that David has sworn an oath to YHWH (vv. 1-10), and second, that YHWH has sworn an oath to David (vv. 11-18). Once again, we are reminded of the davidic covenant. The oath that David has sworn to YHWH is narrated as the past is called into remembrance. Verse 6 makes note of two geographical locations which recounts the narrative of the time when the Ark of the Covenant was taken from Jerusalem by the Philistines. David came from Ephrata when he heard the news of the capturing of the ark and he set out to bring back the ark from Kiriath-Jearim to Jerusalem²⁶³ – its rightful place.²⁶⁴ With this historical event in mind, when the so-called presence of YHWH was stolen from the Israelites, YHWH is now called to return to YHWH's chosen resting place, namely Zion, in a similar fashion. In its second half, Psalm 132 points to the eschatological future (Prinsloo, 2005:471) when YHWH is called to remember the promise made to David that one of his descendants will be seated on the Judaic throne עַדְיָעַד (forever and ever) in verse 12. Though, before the psalm concludes with David's descendant's head being adorned with a crown, YHWH takes over the throne and the kingship in verses 13-16. YHWH again choose Zion as a dwelling, stating that: *"This is my resting place forever and ever; here I will sit enthroned, for I have desired it"* (v. 14). By employing the same adage *"forever and ever"* the author asserts divine rulership over davidic kingship. Underscoring this notion is the striking reference made, in both parts of Psalm 132, to the priesthood. In the first half, the desire is expressed for the priesthood of YHWH to be clothed in righteousness (v. 9), while in the second half the priesthood is clothed with salvation at the hands of YHWH (v. 16). Barbiero (2013:255) points to the importance of YHWH being the one who is undertaking the clothing of the priesthood and states that this action serves to accentuate YHWH's authority and personal intervention on behalf of the people, as is expected from a king. Wilson (2005:397) affirms that this enthronement of YHWH is

²⁶³ Cf. 1 Sam. 7:1 and 2 Sam.6:2.

²⁶⁴ Laato (1992:65-66) disagrees that this is the historic reference of Psalm 132. He believes that the specific occasion that is referenced here, is the transfer of the ark from the tent shrine that David erected to the temple that Solomon constructed.

directed towards those who kindled the hope of the resuming davidic kingship over Israel. This declaration is not aimed at diminishing hope in the davidic covenant, but to address the people's disappointment over the failure of the davidic kingship. It aims to turn the people's hope toward divine kingship instead. Patton (1995:652) states that this time around, with the restoration of Zion and the covenant, YHWH's presence is first established on Zion, before the anointing of the davidic lineage. Where David came first in history, before the sanctuary of YHWH, now YHWH comes first.

Yet, in the final verses of Psalm 132, YHWH promises to “*make a horn grow for David*” whose “*head will be adorned with a radiant crown*”. Even though YHWH resumes the throne and kingship over Israel, David is still bestowed a rank and status. What does this newfound position of David entail? To answer this question, one should note the similar language used in Psalm 110:4 and Psalm 132:11-12. In both instances, an oath is being sworn to David by YHWH. In Psalm 110:4 YHWH swears an oath to David stating that he will forever be a priest in the order of Melchizedek's. Not much is known about this mysterious king of Salem who was also a priest of “El Elyon” (God Most High). However, Wallace (2014:201) remarks that the mystery of Melchizedek is cleared up when we consider the meaning of his name. The ancient Canaanite name מֶלְכִי־צְדָק can be translated with “my king is righteous”. Thus, even when assuming this high-clad priestly role, David (or his descendant) would still be positioned as the king. In Psalm 132:11-12, YHWH swears an oath to David that his descendants will remain enthroned in Israel.²⁶⁵ The oath to the enduring kingship of the davidic dynasty, however, comes with a qualification: “*If your sons keep my covenant and the statutes, I teach them...*” (v. 12). The oath sworn to David is twofold – an oath of both priesthood and kingship – with the requirement of faithfulness to the Torah. It is evident that the entrance of YHWH into the temple will result in the proper restoration of the priesthood as well as the kingship and obedience to the law. It is made clear that the descendant of David would be, not a king, but very precisely a priest-king.²⁶⁶ Mitchell (2006:533) points out that, even though YHWH assumes the role of kingship in Psalm 132, it does not by any means diminish David's role. The kingship of David is portrayed in an even loftier way, by relating David to the role of the priesthood and more precisely his

²⁶⁵ For an exposition on David's combined priesthood and kingship, see Routledge (2009:1-16).

²⁶⁶ Cf. Jr. 33:17 and Zch. 6:13-14.

“Genesis antitype”, the priest-king Melchizedek. This newfound role/title of David promotes him to the position of being seated on YHWH’s right hand (Ps. 110:1). At its core, Psalm 132 is a psalm about place and position. It not only describes the place and position that YHWH holds in the post-exilic community, but also the new place and position the davidic lineage is to assume in this novel paradigm.

From this exposition, we can conclude that the hypothesis of Wilson (2005:392) that divine kingship comes to the fore in Books IV and V carries weight. In Book V there is a definite sense of YHWH’s Kingship being reaffirmed over Israel. However, we have to disagree with Wilson that David is portrayed in a lesser manner to the effect that he becomes nothing but a meek supplicant. A brief overview of the psalms connected to David in Book V demonstrates quite the opposite. In Book V David is portrayed as a new kind of king – a priest-king who uses his enemies as a footstool (Ps. 110:1) and who is exalted to the honourable position of sitting at YHWH’s right hand.

ii. *David in the final Davidic Psalter*

As Book V, and the whole of the *Psalter* for that matter, comes to a close, we are met with David’s final appearance. Psalms 138-145 are the last bearers of the davidic superscript. As already noted, these assigned superscripts should not be passed by as mere editorial additions but should be regarded as a helpful tool to discern the rationale of the pairing as well as the positioning of these so-called “Psalms of David” (Burden & Prinsloo, 1987:16). We are to ask: How does the reference to David in the headings of Psalm 138-145 aid our interpretation of these psalms?

Once again, following Creach’s (1996:101) counsel, the concerns raised in Psalm 137 should be considered to understand the response of Psalms 138-145. Psalm 137 serves as a “bridge text” (Zenger, 2008:365) to the final davidic *Psalter*. Thanks to popular culture²⁶⁷ the concerns raised in Psalm 137 is well known. Although contrary to the good-spirited tune it is set to, it is a psalm that recalls the exile and the dire

²⁶⁷ In 1970, The Melodians were the first to perform and release an adaptation of Psalm 137. The song that was later made famous by Boney M in 1978, is called “Rivers of Babylon”.

suppression the Judeans faced in a land where they lived as captives.²⁶⁸ Psalm 137 further relates the people's remembrance of Zion while far away from it.²⁶⁹ Psalm 137 contemplates the question of "being" amidst circumstances where the Judeans were stripped of everything that contributed to the formation of their identity. The sentiments of this contemplation are summed up in the words of verse 4: "*How can we sing the songs of the Lord while in a foreign land?*" The Babylonians demanded songs of שְׂמֵחָה (joy) – in other words, songs of praise. Praise songs are the kind of songs that can only be sung when in YHWH's presence. Being in a foreign land, far away from Zion/Jerusalem (and thus far away from YHWH's presence), makes the requested song an impossible one to perform (Berlin, 2005:68). Answering the great concern raised in Psalm 137 is Psalm 138. Via superscripts, this psalm and the seven psalms that follow are placed in the mouth of David. In the introduction to the final davidic *Psalter*, David responds with the words: "*I will praise you, Lord, with all my heart; before the gods, I will sing your praise*" (Ps. 138:1).

Van Grol (2010:311-313) suggests that the headings of Psalms 138-145 are indicative for an interpretation of the last group of psalms assigned to David, and what these psalms articulate about David and YHWH. Using the headings as a point of departure, it becomes clear that all the headings, except for Psalms 142 and 145, find their parallel in the other books of the *Psalter*.²⁷⁰ Because of the exceptionality of its heading, attention is foremost directed towards Psalm 142. Psalm 142 is introduced with the heading: מִשְׁכִּיל לְדָוִד בְּהִיּוֹתוֹ בְּמַעְרָה תְּפִלָּה (Maskil of David when he was in the cave, a prayer). Two terms attract attention: מִשְׁכִּיל (*mas^ekîl*) and תְּפִלָּה (*tēpîllā*). Although initially associated with David (in Ps. 32),²⁷¹ the term *mas^ekîl* subsequently

²⁶⁸ Berlin (2005:65) posits that when reading any psalm that reference the exile one should bear in mind that exile is not only geographical displacement, but also religious alienation. This notion comes to the fore in Psalm 137.

²⁶⁹ Ahn (2008:268) notes that Psalm 137 is a delineation of the sociological concerns the Judeans faced when forced into captivity. These sociological concerns include: a feeling of displacement, bereavement over loss of power, being forced to do hard labour as slaves and ultimately the insults endured on their religion.

²⁷⁰ Van Grol (2010:311) shows that the headings of Pss. 138 and 144 is paralleled in Pss. 25-28, 35, 37 and 103; the heading of Ps. 139 is paralleled in Pss. 40 and 109; the heading of Ps. 140 is paralleled in Pss. 13, 19-21, 31, 41, 51 and 64; the headings of Pss. 141 and 143 is paralleled in Pss. 15, 23 and 29.

²⁷¹ Other associations of *mas^ekîl* with David includes: Pss. 52, 53, 54 and 55.

became associated with other authors, such as: the Korahites,²⁷² Asaph²⁷³ and Herman.²⁷⁴ It is striking that the use of the term *mas^ekîl* only occurs in the first three books of the *Psalter*. Therefore, Van Grol (2010:312) insists that attributing this musical term²⁷⁵ to David in Psalm 142, is the equivalent of assigning it back to its original owner. Simultaneously, the term *t^epîllā* (or prayer) does not only occur in the final davidic *Psalter* and is not confined to association with David.²⁷⁶ After it ceased to be associated with David in Psalm 86, the term is only again linked to David in Psalm 142. Moreover, it should be noted that the term *t^epîllā* is used in Book IV. Here, however, the term is associated with Moses (Ps. 90) and an anonymous author (Ps. 102). The reason why the reappearance of the terms *mas^ekîl* and *t^epîllā* is noteworthy is the fact that they are employed in the parts of the *Psalter* (Books I-III) that is associated with the remembrance and celebration of the davidic covenant. In Book IV (the book portraying the exile) the term *t^epîllā* is used in reference to Moses. This then serves as an affirmation of the shift in focus from the davidic covenant (Books I-III) to the Sinaitic covenant (Book IV). Through this movement in the *Psalter*, David is replaced with Moses as the leading figure.²⁷⁷ The reassociation of both the *mas^ekîl* and *t^epîllā* with David in the final davidic *Psalter* (in Book V), points to a new introduction of David. This notion is further strengthened by the use of the interjection סֶלָה (Selah!) that occurs multiple times in the first three books of the *Psalter*, but fell into disuse from Psalm 89 forward, just to be revived in Psalm 140:4, 6 and 9 and Psalm 143:6.²⁷⁸ The reuse of terms that have fallen into disuse, and the reassociation of these terms with the character of David, indicates a systematic revival of the davidic covenant in the shaping of the post-exilic Judean identity. A new character or *persona*

²⁷² Cf. Pss. 42, 44 and 45.

²⁷³ Cf. Pss. 74 and 78.

²⁷⁴ Cf. Pss. 88 and 89.

²⁷⁵ Amzallag & Yona (2016:52) illustrate that the term *mas^ekîl* does not refer to the genre of a psalm, as many are convinced, instead it should be understood as a technical term that conveys musical performance, more specifically “complex antiphony”.

²⁷⁶ Van Grol (2010:313) points out that the term *t^epîllā* is associated with David (Pss. 17, 86 and 42), with Moses (Ps. 90) and with an anonymous author (Ps. 102).

²⁷⁷ Van Grol, 2010:312.

²⁷⁸ According to Briggs (1899:137) only twenty of the davidic psalms use the technical term סֶלָה (Selah!): Pss. 3, 4, 7, 9, 20, 21, 24, 32, 39, 52, 54, 55, 57, 59, 60, 61, 62, 68, 140 and 143. The great gap between its final association with David (in Book III) and its current association with David in Psalms 140 and 143 (Book V) serves to support the perception of Van Grol (2010:312-313) that the final davidic *Psalter* reintroduces a new David.

of David comes to the forefront. Who is this new David that is introduced by Psalms 138-145? Van Grol (2010:313) imagines this newly introduced David to resume his role as leader of the nation, however, his leadership is now confined to prayer. David becomes a prayer leader, who exemplifies subordination through praise and invocation.

Since Psalm 142 includes, what seems to be, a biographical notation about the life of David, it should be considered in our quest to understand the role of David in the final davidic *Psalter*. Koorevaar (2010:586-588) provides some insight into this topic.²⁷⁹ Biographical superscripts concerning the life of David are mainly contained to Books I, II and V. When read chronologically they reveal an inverted biographical history of David. Three key events in the life of David is mentioned to sustain this idea.²⁸⁰ The first key biographical notation is found in Book I, in Psalm 3:1: “*A psalm of David. When he fled from his son Absalom.*”²⁸¹ The second biographical notation is from Book II, in Psalm 51:1: “*For the director of music. A psalm of David. When the prophet Nathan came to him after David had committed adultery with Bathsheba.*”²⁸² The third biographical notation is found in Book V, In Psalm 142:1: “*A maskil of David. When he was in the cave. A prayer.*”²⁸³ When arranging these events on a timeline, it is perceptible that these events are ordered in a manner that reflects the final days of David first in the *Psalter*, while the early days of David are reflected last in the *Psalter*. Koorevaar (2010:588) insists that these events are determinative of the theological climate of the entire *Psalter*. In a sense, the flight of David and the remembrance of his hiding in the cave serves as a reminder of the fragility of even their most esteemed king. It contrasts the fallibility of man with the omnipotence and omnipresence of YHWH. Whereas David fled from Saul and hid in a cave, as the reader is reminded in the superscript, the contents of Psalm 142 contradicts a ‘running away’ from

²⁷⁹ Koorevaar (2010:586) explains that whenever a biographical note is inserted in a superscript, it is advised to read the psalm in interaction with the biographical event.

²⁸⁰ All three key events mentioned, is the first biographical notation with reference to the life of David, to appear in the respective book.

²⁸¹ Cf. 2 Sam. 15:13-14.

²⁸² Cf. 2 Sam. 11:1-12:25.

²⁸³ Johnson (2009:100) maintains that the title of Psalm 142 cannot be linked to a precise episode in the life of David because there is no personal or geographical name attached to it. However, it is possible that the title of Psalm 142 refers to the events of 1 Sam. 22:1-24:7.

something, and rather portrays a ‘running towards’ something.²⁸⁴ Instead of fleeing God, David realises YHWH’s authority and supremacy (Ps. 139:7-12) and thus wilfully decides to run towards YHWH and seek hiding in YHWH: “*I cry to you, O Lord; I say, ‘You are my refuge, my portion in the land of the living’*” (Ps. 142:6). In Psalm 142, YHWH becomes the cave (the safe and familiar refuge), while David is portrayed as the refugee, reminiscent of the time when he was hunted by Saul and was forced to seek hiding in a cave. Here, in the final davidic *Psalter*, David is again in dire need of aid, fleeing from enemies that surround him. In this instance, however, aid is not presented in the form of a cave, but in the form of divine asylum.

Psalm 144 is the only psalm in the final davidic *Psalter* that mentions David, not just in its superscript, but also in its corpus. Hossfeld & Zenger (2011:586) infers that the reference to David should not be understood as an allusion to the historical individual, but rather to the multitude of davidic descendants that succeeded the throne over four centuries. An argument can be made that David becomes the representative of the liberated Judeans, mapping the peripheries of their relationship with YHWH, in the new and unknown domain of their post-exilic life. The plea to deliverance from “*the hands of foreigners*” (v. 11) would precisely resonate with such a community. As the theme of royalty is again touched upon, our attention is diverted to the title assigned to David. His title in Psalm 144, and the only title afforded to David in the final davidic *Psalter*, is that of עֶבֶד (servant) of YHWH. This title serves to illustrate and underline David’s humble submissiveness, to the divine kingship. Even though uplifted and reinstated to the status of king throughout Book V, David’s subordination becomes apparent through the use of this designation. Terrien (2003:900) proclaims the reference to David in verse 5 as ‘servant’ to be the culmination of an already impressive resumé. The reference to David as ‘servant’ in Psalm 144 – the only title afforded to David in the final davidic *Psalter* - expounds David’s monarchical rule as compliance, not assertiveness. By awarding David this title, the dependence of David (as a representative of the post-exilic community) on YHWH, is showcased.

Finally, in our exposition to understand the character of David, as he is portrayed in the final davidic *Psalter*, we are compelled to consider the heading of Psalm 145. In

²⁸⁴ Koorevaar, 2010:588.

Psalm 145, what is assumed to be the concluding psalm to Book V, we find a heading unparalleled in the *Psalter*: תְּהִלָּה לַדָּוִד (A song of praise of David). When considering the superscript of Psalm 145, one must also consider the colon that directly follows this heading. After placing this song of praise in the mouth of David, the psalm follows with the words: אֲרוֹמְמוֹךָ אֱלֹהֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ וְאֶבְרַכְךָ שִׁמְךָ לְעוֹלָם וָעֶד (I will exalt you, my God the King). Van Grol (2010:320) notes that by adding David's name to the superscript, Psalm 145 is matched with the "David fiction" of the rest of the collection. However, this time around, the psalm is not at all about the character of David, but solely about YHWH. The only value added by the character of David is the fact that as the anointed king and representative of Israel, he acknowledges YHWH as King. In the first verse, following the superscript, attention is directed away from David, the earthly king, to YHWH the universal King. Ballhorn (2004:293) sees David's acknowledgement of the kingship of YHWH as his renunciation of his kingship. Although it is clear that David now accepts YHWH's kingship as greater than his own, there is no reason to suspect that he has now abdicated. In Psalm 145, the reader is only guided to realise the role of the "new David" under the universal royal rule of God. His role is to be a praise leader – leading the post-exilic community in the acknowledgement of YHWH's kingship as well as their dependence on this kingship, and accordingly answering this realisation with commendation. In the final davidic *Psalter*, David fulfils his role as priest-king by leading the people in worshipping YHWH.

As Ramantswana (2011:456) notes, the Masoretic *Psalter* ends on a "highly davidic" note. The final eight psalms attributed to David commands Book V to a climax of the realisation of absolute dependence on YHWH. In a medley of hymnic praises and earnest laments, this theme is achieved. In the final davidic *Psalter*, David fulfils a twofold purpose. First, David is the one raising an appeal to YHWH's protection against violent and malevolent men. Second, he acknowledges his dependence on YHWH, praise YHWH for it and becomes the facilitator of such praises among the devotees of YHWH as well as the pagan nations. Within this framework, David becomes the archetype for an attitude of utmost dependence on YHWH's protection. Through these eight psalms, David once again reveals his subordination to YHWH. This is made evident when we encounter his question to YHWH: "Lord, what are

human beings that you care for them, mere mortals that you think of them?” (Ps. 144:3). The theme of subordination should not be seen as contradictory to the foregoing depiction of David’s re-instated priestly kingship, and the powerful position he is given when he is invited to sit at YHWH’s right hand. If anything, the depiction of David’s newfound kingship is brought to an apex, when the king (with all his power and might) wilfully submits to the leadership of YHWH.

Now that we have considered the role of David and his purposeful revival in Book V, as well as his wilful submission to divine kingship in Psalms 138-145, we can continue to consider the redactional grouping of the final davidic *Psalter*.

iii. *Psalm 138 and Psalm 145*

Psalms 138 and 145, the first and last psalms in the final davidic *Psalter*, creates a frame that encapsulates the content of this final davidic collection. Hossfeld & Zenger (2011:6) refer to these two psalms as the “anchor psalms” of the final davidic *Psalter*. While Psalm 138 only launches the theme of transcendence and immanence of YHWH’s universal kingship (Zenger, 2008:365), in Psalm 145 this theme accomplishes lift-off. Whatever is alluded to in Psalm 138 is expressed to its full extent in Psalm 145. Both psalms are a celebration of dependence on YHWH’s Kingship.

At the outset, it is necessary to note that both psalms allude to the content of Deuteronomy 6.²⁸⁵ As the crux of Israelite conviction, the words of Deuteronomy 6 consisted of the primary confession of faith for the Israelites (Willoughby, 1977:77).²⁸⁶ First and foremost the praise in both psalms is directed at the שׁי (name) of YHWH.²⁸⁷ Psalm 138 further expands on this praise by proclaiming it to be “*with all my heart*” (v. 1) – words that allude to the directive in Deuteronomy 6:4-5 to love the אֱלֹהִים (one) God

²⁸⁵ Zenger (1998:94) suggests that the combination of the nouns שׁי (name), כְּבוֹד (glory), חֵסֶד (goodness) and אֱמֻנָה (faithfulness) points to a connection with Ex. 34:6-7.

²⁸⁶ This confession of faith was recited twice a day according to Dt. 6:7. DeClaissé-Walford (2012:73-74) call attention to the fact that Psalm 145 features in the Jewish Prayer Book to a greater extent than any other psalm and was to be repeated in the same manner in which the *Shema* was repeated by the Israelites, further underscoring the relation between Ps. 145 and Dt. 6.

²⁸⁷ Cf. Pss. 138:2 and 145:1-2.

with one's entire being. The psalmist's choice to praise YHWH "*before the gods*" (v. 1) is also related to the prohibition to follow other gods in Deuteronomy 6:14. The pertinent assertion that YHWH will be praised in the presence of foreign deities serves to underline the psalmist's commitment to YHWH. The Israelite confession of faith holds the promise of guardianship denoting YHWH's fortification and blessing if indeed the Israelites "*do what is right and good in the Lord's sight*" (Dt. 6:18-19). Both the first and the final psalm of the fifth davidic *Psalter* touch on the promise of preservation (Ps. 138:7) and protection (Ps. 145:20) for those who remain faithful to YHWH. A cardinal element of the Israelites' confession of faith is the duty of impressing the deeds of YHWH on their children and following generations. As the culmination of the final davidic *Psalter*, the psalmist of Psalm 145 proclaims the post-exilic community custodians of the works and mighty acts of YHWH, stating that one generation will divulge all they experience of YHWH's might, to the next, as an exclamation of dependence on YHWH.

While embracing the Sinaitic covenant by relating the truths the Israelites were reminded of in Deuteronomy 6, the psalmist is also coming to grips with the re-imagination of the davidic covenant in a post-exilic paradigm. In both Psalms 138 and 145, the sovereignty of YHWH is deliberately asserted and emphasised. In Psalm 138:1-2 the psalmist, for the first time, proclaims the transcendence of YHWH's divine rule. When David commits to praising YHWH "*in front of gods*" we are met with a phenomenon never before seen in the *Psalter*. The place of worship is shifted. The Judeans, like most Ancient Near Eastern people, believed the presence of YHWH to be located in their temple (on Mount Zion) in their Holy City (Jerusalem). With the destruction of the city and the demolition of the temple, the Judeans were in despair, not knowing how to sing to YHWH while located by the rivers of Babylon (Ps. 137:1). Psalm 138, eradicate all such despair by claiming to be able to praise YHWH, even though far removed from the temple and the Holy City, and even though they are located in a foreign nation in front of foreign deities. Dahood (1970:277) asserts that because the terms טוֹבָה (goodness) and אֱמוּנָה (faithfulness) are paired in other royal psalms,²⁸⁸ just as it is paired in Psalm 138:2, the nature of the psalm should be re-imagined as imperial – underlining the sovereignty of YHWH. Despite the flagrant

²⁸⁸ Cf. Pss. 57:11; 61:8; 86:15; 92:3 and 108:5.

admittance that YHWH is King (in Ps. 145:1), another subtler, allusion is made to YHWH's sovereignty. The culmination of references to YHWH's Kingship and the kingdom is concentrated in verses 11-13, which incidentally are also the *kaph*, *lamed* and *mem* lines of the acrostic psalm. Arranging these letters backwards spells out the Hebrew word for king, namely מֶלֶךְ (Kimelman, 1994:45; DeClaisé-Walford, 2012:58), thus expressively stating YHWH's sovereignty. In Psalm 138 the psalmist expresses the birth of the realisation of YHWH's transcendence in Israelite contemplation when YHWH's presence is no longer understood as confined to the physical boundaries of the temple in Jerusalem. But then again, the psalmist of Psalm 145 raises the stakes when the psalmist states that: "*Your kingdom is an everlasting kingdom*" (v. 13). With this, the psalmist emphasises that YHWH's kingdom and divine rule not only transcends physical boundaries, but also the boundaries of time. Prinsloo (1991:465) states that Psalm 145:13 serves to underline the permanence as well as the continuity of the divine kingdom and rule.

It is indisputably clear that both Psalm 138 and 145 endeavours to convey something about the greatness and glory of YHWH.²⁸⁹ Hossfeld & Zenger (2011:530) indicate that terms such as גָּדוֹל (great), כְּבוֹד (glory) and רוּם (to be high/exalted) attribute to the depiction of YHWH as a transcendent God. Similar terms pertaining to the transcendent rule of YHWH in Psalm 145, includes: עֲזוּז (strength), הוֹד (majesty), הִדְרָה (splendour) and גְּבוּרָה (might). Contrasted with the power and might of YHWH is those who receive YHWH's attention and care – those who are dependent on YHWH's provision.

As a theme, both Psalm 138 and 145 emphasise YHWH's affection for the weary and downtrodden. In Psalm 138:6 the exalted YHWH is described as kindly looking on the שָׁפָל (lowly), while in Psalm 145:14 YHWH is the one who upholds לְכָל־הַנִּפְלִיִּים (all that fall) and raises לְכָל־הַכְּפוּפִים (all that are bend down).²⁹⁰ This language of particularism seems to favour Israel (Lama, 2013:5), who in a post-exilic framework,

²⁸⁹ Cf. Ps. 138:5 and Ps. 145:3, 6, 5, 11, 12.

²⁹⁰ These sentiments are echoed in 1 Sam. 2:8; Pss. 113:7-8; 146:8. These texts are references to what is called "YHWH's option for the poor" (Hossfeld & Zenger, 2011:600).

would be considered as the ones who are lowly, fallen and/or bend down.²⁹¹ They were no longer the powerful and feared nation they were under the rule of David. The language of particularism serves to underline Israel's dependence on YHWH. However, this language of particularism in both psalms quickly gives way to the language of universalism, when YHWH's love and provision is directed, not only to Israel but also to the **מַעֲשֵׂי יְדֵיךָ** (works of your [YHWH's] hands) in Psalm 138:8, and to **לְכָל-חַי** (every living thing) in Psalm 145:16. The inclusivity of the language employed here serves to emphasise the boundlessness of YHWH's rule. Lama (2013:5) points out that, this language of universalism seems to contradict Israel's eschatological expectations of the davidic kingdom. This use of language challenges and redefines the davidic kingdom, in the light of YHWH's royal and universal rule. For this reason, some consider Psalm 145 the final conversion from davidic rulership to theocracy (Van Grol, 2010:319) showcasing not only Israel but the whole of creation's reliance on YHWH.

Affirming this redefinition and acknowledgement of YHWH's rulership as universal is the call to praise raised in both psalms. Anderson (1991:15-20) notes that the prayer of praise in the *Psalter* can be paralleled with the role of sacrifice in the Torah and Deuteronomistic history. In Deuteronomy **שִׂמְחָה** (joy) is associated with sacrificial feasting. In the psalms **שִׂמְחָה** (joy) is associated with praising YHWH. Here, praise is more than just an attitude of gratitude, it is a purposeful activity, it is a ritual.²⁹² If praise becomes ritual the one who inspires and mediates it becomes a priest. The praise and witness of David is not only directed at the gods of other nations but is also aimed at the rulers and subjects of these foreign deities. Where once the praises of YHWH were only placed in the mouths of Israel, now David is the one who wants **כָּל-מֶלֶךְ-כִּי-אֶרֶץ** (all the kings of the earth) in Psalm 138:4 and **כָּל-מַעֲשֵׂיךָ** (all your works) in Psalm 145:10 to come to appreciate the goodness and faithfulness of YHWH, and ultimately dependence on YHWH, through his unconcealed celebration. David's thanksgiving

²⁹¹ The language of particularism which favours Israel as the chosen nation of YHWH, can be seen in the collections that surrounds the final davidic Psalter. Cf. Pss. 137:7-9; 147:20; 148:14; 149:2-9. This language vilifies any other nation that is not Israel.

²⁹² Cf. Ps. 141:2

aims to make the glory of YHWH, not only publicly, but also universally known. Zenger (1998:94) adds that the purpose of the praise demanded in Psalm 145, is to **שִׁמְחוּ בְּשֵׁם קְדוֹשׁוֹ** (and let all flesh bless [YHWH's] Holy name). Extending the praise of YHWH across the borders of multiple nations points to the acknowledgement, the acceptance and finally the celebration of the universal kingship of YHWH. David, being the one to call on the realisation of dependence on YHWH and being the one to call on these joyful praises, now fully assumes his priestly role.

One more theme connecting Psalms 138 and 145, which affirms their connection and their encirclement of the final davidic *Psalter* is 'the way of the Lord'-theme. The **יְהוָה דִּרְכּוֹ** (way of YHWH) is a theme that protrudes the whole of the final davidic *Psalter*. In both psalms, the 'way of YHWH' is employed and should be understood as a metaphorical reference. This figurative 'way of YHWH' would then refer to YHWH's principles and laws. In Psalm 138 the psalmist utters the expectation that the kings of the earth shall be convinced of the "universal quality of YHWH's precepts" (Hossfeld, 2019:6). Furthermore, in Psalm 145, again, the 'way of YHWH' points to the lawful demeanour and righteous conduct of YHWH and consequently denotes a moral subtext which once again signifies "preceptive ways."²⁹³ In relation to the 'way of YHWH,' both instances present the reader with a contrasting statement that juxtaposes YHWH's attitude towards the righteous and the wicked. In Psalm 138 the 'way of YHWH' is to look kindly on the lowly and to look on the lofty from afar (v. 6). Psalm 145 sees YHWH drawing near to the righteous (those who call on YHWH in truth) in verse 18 and YHWH watching overall "*who love him*" (v. 20a), while YHWH is described as destroying the wicked (v. 20b). This understanding of the 'way of YHWH' in Psalms 138 and 145 relates to the 'way'-theology as presented in Psalm 1. In Psalm 1 the reader is presented with the mutually exclusive disposition of the righteous and the wicked. The primary basis on which their differences is calculated is the kind of relationship they have with the directive of YHWH. Weber (2006:244-245) suggest that Psalm 1 articulates a responsibility to the directive of YHWH in a similar fashion as the directive found in the "Shema-Yisrael" in Deuteronomy 6, calling the Torah as illustrative of YHWH's precepts to mind. Botha (2005:508) defends this notion by

²⁹³ Cf. Hossfeld (2019:6).

asserting that in Psalm 1 the righteous person is described as a traveller who uses the Torah as some sort of road map to guide him/her in the ‘way of YHWH’. The promise of YHWH’s preservation and protection for those who stay true to the ‘way of YHWH’, i.e. the directive/precepts of YHWH, by means of keeping the instructions of the Torah, is a sentiment that then connects the final davidic *Psalter* with Psalm 1. The theme introduced in Psalm 1, that forms the basis of the theology of the *Psalter*, achieves completion in the final davidic *Psalter*, in the light of YHWH’s eternal Kingship and the whole of creation’s dependence thereupon.

iv. *Psalms 140-143*

Nestled in between the joyous hymnic tones of Psalms 138 and 145 with its universal call for all creation to join in YHWH’s praises, is a collection of psalms that are quite contrasting in their mood. Psalms 140-143, all psalms of supplication, are grouped based on their semantic relationship (Zenger, 1998:94).

All four psalms start with a similar petition— a petition for protection against external conflict. In Psalm 140:1 a petition to be rescued from evil-doers and protected from violent men is heard. Psalm 141:1 directs a petition at YHWH to listen to the psalmist’s call and rush to the psalmist’s aid against those attempting to entrap the psalmist. Both Psalms 142:1 and 143:1 is the plea of a supplicant, who is exhausted from constant persecution, to be sustained by the mercy of YHWH. From the outset, it becomes clear that all four psalms address external troubles by petitioning for aid. It is not inner turmoil but external circumstances created by enemies, which are bemoaned and are the motivation behind these prayers for protection. This plea for protection is further seen in the manner in which the psalmist considers YHWH. Throughout Psalms 140-143 the psalmist expressly states how the psalmist relates to YHWH. In Psalm 140:8 YHWH is described as covering the psalmist’s head in the day of battle. Psalms 141:8 the psalmist takes YHWH as a *חֹסֶה* (place of refuge) and similarly in Psalm 142:6 as a *מִחֹסֶה* (shelter). Psalm 143:9 the psalmist pleads with YHWH to be hidden in YHWH: *אֲלֵיךָ כָסֵתִי יְהוָה* (I flee unto thee to hide me).

When describing this collection of psalms as ‘prayers for protection’, we are obliged to ask: ‘Protection from who and from what?’ First of all, none of the four psalms seems to be specific as to whom the psalmist is seeking protection from. In Psalm 140 the psalmist raises the petition to be saved from רָע (evil) and חַמְסִים (violent) men. In Psalm 141:4 we see the psalmist struggling against men who פָּעֲלֵי-אָוֶן (perform wickedness). Furthermore, in Psalm 142, the persecutors are not described by a description, instead, they are only referred to in verse 4 by their corrupt actions - לִי - פָּחַ טָמְנוּ (they [who] have hidden a snare for me). In verse 7 the psalmist adds to this description by asking to be rescued מִרְדְּפָי (from pursuers). Finally, in Psalm 143:3, the persecutors of the psalmist are again described as an אֹיֵב (enemy) who are in pursuit of the psalmist. The nature of the attack also seems to differ from psalm to psalm. A description of the conduct of the wicked in Psalm 140, exposes their actions as verbal persecution (v. 4). The nature of the struggle in Psalm 141, however, differs from the foregoing psalm. Here the psalmist’s battle is against the temptation to partake in the evil deeds of the wicked (vv. 3-4) and consequently, to sacrifice principles to be counted under the lot of the godless (Kirkpatrick, 1912:792). In Psalms 142 and 143 the psalmist is depicted as someone who is being trailed by the enemies to the point where the psalmist is attempting to flee this constant hunt. Hossfeld & Zenger (2011:511) insist that the propensity to generalise the persecutors and not specify their indiscretions indicates a wisdom motif in the psalms. However, there is still more to say about the nature of the attack the psalmist is seeking protection from. In all four of these psalms, hunting metaphors are used to explain the siege on the psalmist’s life. In Psalm 140:6 the hunter’s chosen manoeuvres is that of a פָּח (snare) and a רֶשֶׁת (net).²⁹⁴ The פָּח (snare) is a trap that is primarily used for the capturing of birds. The trap is set and bait is used to lure the bird into the snare. Once inside, the snare snaps shut, making it impossible for the bird to escape.²⁹⁵ This image is again repeated in Psalms 141:9 and 142:4. The רֶשֶׁת (net), again, is spread on the ground

²⁹⁴ Keel (1978:89) states that in the psalms hunting refers to methods that includes the digging of pits, the setting of nets and snares. These are all methods that aim to entrap prey, as opposed to javelin hunting in which man and beast comes face to face.

²⁹⁵ Keel, 1978:91.

and hidden from sight. Whatever strays across this hidden net is captured when the cords of the net are pulled closed.²⁹⁶ Psalm 141:10 uses another hunting term, that of a **מִכְנָר** (net). This, according to Tucker (2016:235), is a somewhat larger net (similar to a fishnet), used for the capturing of larger animals. This net would be raised vertically. Hunters would then chase their prey into these nets. A final hunting technique referred to in this collection of laments, is that of the **בֹּר** (pit) in Psalm 143:7. A pit is a deep hole that is dug with the purpose to entrap the prey when it falls into it. Keel (1978:70-72) likens the pit, as it is employed here, to a cistern in which the wicked was usually kept without the option to escape. When considering the extent of the hunting techniques mentioned in Psalms 140-143 that is employed in pursuit of the psalmist, Tucker (2016:234) suggests that it serves to signal the impending destruction and/or death of the one being entrapped. Plainly put, the danger the psalmist is bemoaning is real. The vivid recount of the extreme measures that the wicked will go to, to cast down, subdue and take possession of the psalmist, colours a picture of the sheer “powerlessness” (Tucker, 2016:235) that the psalmist is experiencing. This brings us to the conclusion that the psalmist of Psalms 140-143 is desperately seeking protection against the wicked.

Throughout this collection of psalms, a very lucid image is drafted of the enemies as **רָשָׁע** (wicked). This image is then directly contrasted with the psalmist’s self-image. In Psalm 140 the psalmist counts him-/herself under the **צַדִּיק** (righteous). Purely on this basis, the psalmist claims due assistance from YHWH. Creach (2014:329) explains that throughout the psalms human beings can be related to YHWH in one of two manners - either as **צַדִּיק** (righteous) or as **רָשָׁע** (wicked). The righteous are distinguished from the wicked primarily based on how they react in times of trouble. Where, in trouble, the wicked rely on themselves,²⁹⁷ is only out for their gain²⁹⁸ and blaspheme YHWH,²⁹⁹ the righteous choose to pray to YHWH,³⁰⁰ and to give thanks to

²⁹⁶ Keel, 1978:91-92.

²⁹⁷ Cf. Ps. 36:3.

²⁹⁸ Cf. Ps. 10:3.

²⁹⁹ Cf. Ps. 10:13.

³⁰⁰ Cf. Ps. 145:11

YHWH.³⁰¹ In Psalm 140:14 the psalmist employs this exact technique, contrasting the evil deeds of the wicked to the psalmist's praise of YHWH. In Psalm 141:5 the psalmist submits to the wisdom teachings of the righteous, stating that it would be equal to being anointed with oil. Through this request, the psalmist's identification with the righteous is implicit. This relation to the righteous is taken a step further in Psalm 142:8 when the psalmist claims that the support of other righteous people will refute the psalmist's expressed "loneliness and rejection" (Basson, 2008:269). However, the theme of righteousness gains a new perspective in Psalm 143:11. Here the psalmist no longer relies on the psalmist's righteousness and/or the righteousness of others to be sustained with. The psalmist realises that the only righteousness that can be of aid is that of YHWH. Initially, the persuasive technique the psalmist uses and relies on to motivate YHWH's protection is to count him-/herself under the righteous. However, the psalmist realises that it is not self-justification that would be of aid in this dire predicament, but only the **טוֹבָה** (goodness) of YHWH. Finally, the psalmist counts on the **צְדִקָּה** (righteousness) of YHWH, and not of the self or others, to be the protection the psalmist so desires.

v. *Psalms 139 and 144*

The despair of the psalmist, as it is depicted in Psalms 140-143, is balanced out by the praise for YHWH in Psalms 138 and 145. Fear for the threat of enemies (Pss. 140:5; 141:9; 142:3 and 143:3) is neutralised by the celebration of dependence on YHWH (Pss. 138:3 and 145:9). While Psalms 140-143 bewails the helplessness of the psalmist, Psalms 138 and 145 rejoices in divine aid. This begs the question: What brought about the psalmist's shift from dire despair to utmost praise?

A closer look at the remainder of the final davidic *Psalter* gives a clue as to what aids this transition of the psalmist from begging for protection to the realisation of dependence on YHWH and subsequently expounding this realisation into praise. Both Psalms 139 and 144 provide the reader with a comprehension of the universal Kingship of YHWH, and what this divine rulership and aid entail. It also develops the

³⁰¹ Cf. Ps. 140:13.

psalmist's realisation and acceptance of YHWH's royal reign which then culminates in the psalmist's explication of trust in YHWH. This is done in a complementary fashion that is similar to Psalms 138 and 145, i.e. what is said in Psalm 139 is further illustrated in Psalm 144.

At first glance, Psalm 144 seems to take the form of a hymn as the pronounced introduction is shaped as an invocation of praise, inspired by trust in YHWH (Weiser, 1962:824). Based on the psalmist affirmation of YHWH as rock, followed by YHWH's teachings on war and combat, Terrien (2003:898) suggests that Psalm 144 is the prayer of a happy and successful warrior who has personally experienced YHWH's protection. Employing the same approach, Eaton (2003:470) describe the psalm as a "praising testimony" to YHWH who shields the king on the day of the attack. Hossfeld & Zenger (2011:581) suggest that verses 1-2 should be understood as a benediction in the form the יְהוָה בָּרְכוּךְ (blessed be YHWH) -formula, consequently exposing Psalm 144 as a prayer of thanksgiving. This classification, however, does not account for the plea that is found in verses 5-8 which is partially repeated in verses 10b-11, as well as the prayer for affluence in verses 12-15. Attempting to account for the entreaties found in the psalm, Booij (2009:173) argues that the divine instruction in war illustrates that the psalmist is still in the preparatory phase before going to war, rendering Psalm 144 a preparatory prayer. Goldingay (2008:683) underlines the diverse nature of verses 1-11 and 12-15, stating that the first sequence consists of praise and plea, while the second is consistent with an affirmation of prosperity. On this basis, Psalm 144 is then broadly classified as a prayer about YHWH's significance in contrast to the fleeting nature of humanity. The general conclusion amongst scholars is that Psalm 144 consists of a collection of unrelated fragments taken from unrelated psalms (Briggs & Briggs, 1969:520-520; Dahood, 1970:331-333). This miscellaneous nature of Psalm 144 and the inability of scholars to form-critically classify the psalm to a single *genre*, reminds of the heterogeneous nature of Psalm 139. Similar to Psalm 139, Psalm 144 cannot be classified under a pre-determined literary form (or *genre*). Furthermore, both psalms display elements of praise and lament. This similarity shared between Psalms 139 and 144, necessitates a further investigation into the collective features of these psalms.

In Psalm 139 it is clear that YHWH is knowledgeable about the psalmist. In verses 1-4 the psalmist grapples with the realisation of YHWH's intimate knowledge. YHWH יָדַע (knows) every action, thought and word of the psalmist. The psalmist marvels at this knowledge of YHWH and states that it is too פֶּלְאִי (wonderful) and לֵא-אוֹכֵל (unattainable) for the human mind (v. 6). YHWH's knowledge, however, is more than mere acquaintance, it serves a greater outcome. In Psalm 139 the outcome of YHWH's intimate familiarity with the psalmist is seen in verse 5, when it is stated that the psalmist is צוּר (shut-in/barricaded) from behind and in front and that the hand of YHWH rests on the psalmist. The effect of YHWH's pervasive knowledge of the psalmist is that it instructs YHWH's fortification of the psalmist. In Psalm 144 we see a repetition of the theme of YHWH's knowledge in verse 3 when the psalmist asks: "YHWH, what is man that you know him, son of mankind that you think of him?" This question is taken from Psalm 8:5. However, the psalmist took the זָכַר (to be mindful) of Psalm 8:5 and replaced it with יָדַע (to know) in Psalm 144:3. The possibility exists that the psalmist of Psalm 144 took inspiration from Psalm 139 (Zenger. 1998:96). Again, YHWH's knowledge of the psalmist is claimed as a basis for a greater outcome. This time the outcome is לִמֹּד (to teach). Where at first YHWH's knowledge of the psalmist has the result of fortifying the psalmist, now YHWH engages the psalmist by teaching the psalmist's hand for קָרָב (war) and the psalmist's fingers for מִלְחָמָה (combat).³⁰² Thus, both Psalm 139 and 144 share the motif of divine knowledge and its implication in the life of the psalmist.

Another striking resemblance between Psalm 139 and 144 is the use of the root צוּר. In Psalm 139:5 it is said that YHWH צוּר (barricades) the psalmist. Not only is YHWH intimately acquainted with the psalmist, but YHWH shields the psalmist from all sides. The incomprehensibility thereof leaves the psalmist in awe. This theme is then picked up by the introduction to Psalm 144, when the psalmist calls YHWH צוּרִי יְהוָה (YHWH my rock)³⁰³. The same root for the Hebrew verb "to barricade" is here

³⁰² Instruction for war and combat relates to Ps. 18:35.

³⁰³ Psalm 144 is introduced with a similar invocation to that of Ps. 18:3 and 47.

employed as a noun to the description of YHWH as “rock”. By referring to YHWH as “the Lord my Rock” (Ps. 144:1) the psalmist again takes inspiration from Psalm 139, and thus inevitably associates Psalms 139 and 144 with each other.

Starting with the questions “*Where can I go from your Spirit?*” and “*Where can I flee from your presence?*” the rhetorical questions of Psalm 139:7-12 relates the theme of YHWH’s all-encompassing presence and the psalmist’s inability to evade YHWH. In these verses the universality of YHWH’s presence is articulated as stretching first and foremost from the שָׁמַיִם (heavens). Then, following extensive merisms as descriptive of YHWH’s presence, the psalmist considers the personal implication of the universal rule of YHWH and concludes that anywhere the psalmist attempts to flee, the יָד (hand) of YHWH will provide guidance. In Psalm 144 there is no sign of the psalmist even considering ways or means of escaping YHWH’s presence. On the contrary, in Psalm 144:5 the psalmist invites YHWH’s omnipresence in the form of a theophany (Weiser, 1962:824). YHWH is invited to הִטְשֵׁם־שָׁמַיִךְ (spread out from your heavens).³⁰⁴ The heavens thus are the starting point for both the description of YHWH’s omnipresence in Psalm 139 and the foundation for the theophany of YHWH in Psalm 144. Furthermore, claims that are made in Psalm 139 to the guidance of YHWH’s hand and the grasping of YHWH’s right hand (v. 10), is repeated in the appeal of Psalm 144:7: שְׁלַח יָדֶיךָ מִמְּרוֹם (send your hands from on high).³⁰⁵ If indeed Psalm 144 is a prayer modelled around the content of Psalm 18, and the request for YHWH’s theophany in Psalm 144:5-7 is an altered rendition of Psalm 18:8-18, then the request of the psalmist for YHWH’s hands to reach down should be carefully considered. It should be noted that the word יָד (hand) appears in Psalm 18 a total of four times: first about the psalmist’s enemies (vv. 1) and second about the psalmist’s own hands (v. 21, 25

³⁰⁴ Hossfeld & Zenger (2011:585) suggest that the petition for YHWH to reach down from the heavens finds its sole parallel in Is. 63:19. However, the prayer of Psalm 144:5-7 is seen as an excerpt from the extended prayer in Ps. 18:8-18.

³⁰⁵ There are different theories as to why Psalm 144 speaks of the hands (plural) of YHWH. Goldingay (2008:687) reckons that in Psalm 144 the ‘hands’ of YHWH are contrasted with the ‘hand’ of the enemy (in v. 11), consequently underlining YHWH’s power and might of the supplicant’s adversaries. Hossfeld & Zenger (2011:585) offer a more comprehensive explanation. They infer that when the hand of YHWH is conveyed in the singular it points to YHWH’s assistance (cf. Dt. 5:15; 6:21). However, when the plural “hands” of YHWH is used in the psalms, it refers to the creative actions of YHWH. Psalm 144 thus does characterise the omnipresent YHWH also as the creator YHWH.

and 35). Not once is the term 'hand' used in reference to YHWH in Psalm 18. However, in Psalm 144 the term 'hand(s)' denotes a "three-cornered confrontation" (Allen, 2002:291) between the attacking hands of the foreigners (v. 11), the battle-trained hands of the psalmist (v. 1) and the reaching and delivering hands of YHWH (v. 7). Nowhere in Psalm 18:17-18, a physical part of YHWH's body is called to the psalmist's aid. However, the awareness of YHWH's inescapable presence in Psalm 139 is directly connected to YHWH's hands. On this basis, it could be inferred that the psalmist of Psalm 144 again took inspiration from Psalm 139.

In Psalm 139:13-18, the supremacy of YHWH is expressed by describing YHWH as being present from before the psalmist's birth. It continues by suggesting that YHWH knows all the יָמַי (days) of the psalmist's life – the days that are already passed and those that are still to come. All the days of the psalmist's life are written in the book of YHWH. The section then concludes with the exclamation that YHWH's thoughts about the psalmist are vast and endless. These verses convey much more about the nature of YHWH than it does about the nature of humanity. Here the emphasis falls on YHWH's omnipotence. In Psalm 144 the psalmist realises YHWH's omnipotence and contrasts it with the brevity of human life. The psalmist rhetorically asks why YHWH is so concerned about mankind and then continues to venture an answer as to why this occupation of YHWH is considered bizarre, by comparing human beings to a breath. Simultaneously, the יָמַי (days) of human beings are compared to a shadow that momentarily passes by. Hossfeld & Zenger (2011:585) points to the significance of this comparison utilising the "anthropological-theological question" taken from Psalm 8. Here, royal anthropology is presented, describing the majesty of YHWH's created works as positioned under the rule of the earthly king. In Psalm 144, which is considered to be a royal psalm, this royal anthropology of Psalm 8 is opposed by the psalmist (who is considered to be a davidic king) presenting himself in the mortality and weakness of the king's subjects. In Psalm 139 there is a clear focus on YHWH's omnipotence by suggesting that YHWH knows all the יָמַי (days) of the psalmist. An accompanying thought is presented in Psalm 144 when the fleeting nature of the human life is expressed by relating the יָמַי (days) of human beings to a passing shadow. Goulder (1998:273) suggest that the royal psalmist finds comfort in mortality

through realising YHWH's grace and compassion for the human being. Both Psalms 139 and 144 present the reader with the hypothesis that the life of an individual (even the life of a davidic king) depends on the omnipotent divine guardian.

Another area in which Psalms 139 and 144 converge is in their depiction of the enemy. In Psalm 139 the harsh tone of verses 19-22 throws the harmonious tones of the preceding eighteen verses out of balance. Here the psalmist explicitly takes a stance against the enemies of YHWH. In verses, 21a, 21b and 22a the use of the root שָׂנֵא (hate) insistently illustrate the psalmist's bearing towards those who rise against YHWH. Through the psalmist's hate for the רָשָׁע (wicked), the enemies of YHWH become the enemies of the psalmist. This is expressly stated in the closing words of verse 22 when the psalmist pronounces that: "enemies they are to me". In Psalm 144 the psalmist takes a stance against בְּנֵי נֹכַר (sons of foreign land).³⁰⁶ Deliberating on the transgressions of the "wicked" (Ps. 139) and the "foreigners" (Ps. 144) again we see a shared theme. Both psalms refer to the offences of the enemies as שָׁוְיָא (vanity/deceit).³⁰⁷ In Psalm 139:20 the accusation against the psalmist's opponents is that their speech is raising לְשׁוֹן (to vanity), namely, mocking the name of YHWH. In Psalm 144:8 the psalmist again accuses the opponents of דְּבַר־שׁוֹיָא (speaking vanity). However, this time it is uncertain against who the vanity/deceit is aimed. Hossfeld & Zenger (2011:586) suggest that the enemies are lifting a sacrilegious discourse against the cities of Judah. This notion is further strengthened when the same phrase is repeated in verse 11. Hossfeld & Zenger (2011:586) add that the phrase יְמִינַי שִׁקְרָא (deceitful right hands) is a reference to gestural swearing, thus further strengthening

³⁰⁶ The word נֹכַר (foreign) frequently occurs in the Hebrew Bible, usually as an adjective coupled with the אֱלֹהִים (gods). Tucker (2014:128) cites that the phrase בְּנֵי נֹכַר (sons of foreign land) as it is used in Ps. 144:8 and 11, appears only eighteen times in the Hebrew Bible and mostly in Is. 56-66. The phrase almost always infers to a political situation.

³⁰⁷ Holman (2007:124-125) refer to the use of לְשׁוֹן in Jr. 18:15 of which the translation reads "they burn incense to worthless לְשׁוֹן (idols)" to underscore the notion that idol-worship is being referred to in Ps. 139:20.

the idea that the attack of the enemies is verbal. In both psalms, “vanity” and/or “deceit” seems to be the root cause of the psalmist’s struggle with the enemy.³⁰⁸

A final parallel can be drawn between the concluding verses of Psalms 139 and 144. Psalm 139 closes with the psalmist requests to be “searched” and “known” by YHWH. Mimicking the ambivalence observed in verses 1-18 (praise) and verses 19-22 (supplication), the psalmist makes a double petition. First, the psalmist entreats YHWH to see if the **דַּרְךְ-עֲצָב** (way of the idol) is in the psalmist. Thereafter, the psalmist also appeals to YHWH to be led **בְּדַרְךְ עוֹלָם** (in the way everlasting). Würthwein (1957:913) suggests that the psalmist’s choice of words indicates the way to the temple where YHWH, and only YHWH, is to be worshipped. The psalmist thus points to two opposed “ways”: The way of idol worship as opposed to the way of YHWH-worship. The psalmist’s plea is to be guided in the latter. Psalm 144 concludes with two beatitudes in verse 15. Both beatitudes are presented with the phrase **אַשְׁרֵי** (blessed is). Following the prayer for deliverance in verses 1-11, the psalmist colours a picture of welfare in verses 12-14.³⁰⁹ Goulder (1998:275) describe these verses as a sketch of what the psalmist would consider utopian conditions. In a cause and effect manner, the first beatitudes follow this description of the prosperity of the crops and animal and human progeny (Allen, 1983:292). The first beatitude makes it clear that the **עַם** (people) of whom it can be said that their barns overflow, their herds multiply and their offspring is plentiful and strong, such people are **אַשְׁרֵי** (blessed). The entire psalm culminates in the second beatitude, drawing its conclusion from the first beatitude and revealing a fundamental lesson to live by: “the fate of the people called blessed is determined by its community with its God YHWH” (Hossfeld & Zenger,

³⁰⁸ Hossfeld & Zenger (2011:586) relates the transgressions of the enemies in Pss. 139 and 144 to the psalmist’s prayer in Ps. 141:2-3. Here the psalmist raises a petition for his/her mouth to be guarded. Furthermore, in v. 4 the psalmist prays not to be tempted to join the deeds of the wicked. When the prayer of Psalm 141 is read in relation to the description of the indiscretions of the wicked in Pss. 139 and 144, we are to understand the attack of the enemies in the final davidic Psalter, not as physical attacks, but rather as verbal disputes.

³⁰⁹ Even though the psalmist is referred to by name in v. 10, the use of the collective language in vv. 12-15 illustrates that the deliverance prayed for is not by an individual for an individual. The supplication of Psalm 144 is made on behalf of the entire Judean community “whose prosperity and blessing would follow YHWH’s deliverance” (Lama, 2013:210).

2011:588).³¹⁰ Comparing the concluding statements to each of the psalms, we observe that Psalm 139 concludes with a plea to YHWH to be led in an everlasting way, while Psalm 144 concludes with a description of the results of a life lived in such a manner. Zenger (1998:96) states that the prayer found in Psalm 139:19-24, could be considered the introduction to the series of prayers found in Psalms 140-143. The culmination of these prayers is then found in Psalm 144:12-15, in which the results of a life committed to YHWH is laid bare. Tomes (2007:423) suggests that the “peace and prosperity” the psalmist of Psalm 144 longs to be enjoyed by the people, has no parallel in the *Psalter*. This view, however, is contested by that of DeClaissé-Walford (2006:460) when she associates the אֲשֶׁרִי (blessed is) of Psalm 144:15 with the same phrase in Psalm 1:1 and Psalm 2:12 (the opening and closing verses of the introduction to the entire *Psalter*). In Psalm 1 the collection of psalms is introduced by underlining the theme of two ways in life: the way of the wicked vs. the way of the righteous. It is stated that those who choose to follow in the way of the righteous, instead of the way of the wicked, will be אֲשֶׁרִי (blessed). Psalm 2 follows by introducing the theme of royalty (DeClaissé-Walford, 2006:456). Here it is emphasised that YHWH is the one who appoints, anoints and instructs the davidic throne descendant, thus colouring YHWH as the One ordering the directive and the davidic king as subordinate to YHWH. It then follows with an encouragement, urging the readers of the *Psalter*, to take refuge in YHWH, for those who do so will be אֲשֶׁרִי (blessed). In Psalm 139:23-24, we see the psalmist heeding this instruction by proclaiming to trust YHWH to the extent that YHWH is invited to scrutinise the psalmist heart and thoughts, to assure him/her being led in an everlasting way. Psalm 144 then follows by illustrating the results of trusting in YHWH’s universal kingship and rule, as similar to the encouragement found in Psalm 2:12.

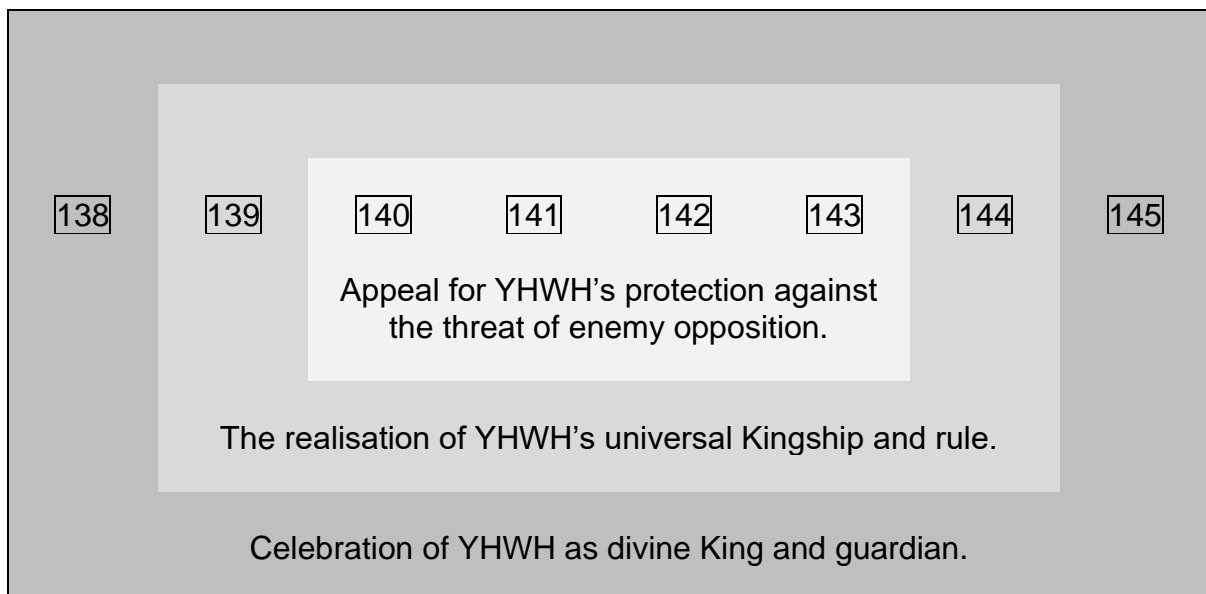
Where Psalm 139 is a reflection on YHWH’s omnipresent, omniscient and omnipotent Kingship and rule, Psalm 144 is the prayer of a davidic king describing the cosmic scale of YHWH’s intervention. By representing David (or the davidic king) as the orator of both psalms, the davidic kingship is contrasted to the divine kingship. Both psalms

³¹⁰ Hossfeld & Zenger (2011:588) conclude that the final beatitude of Psalm 144 finds its parallel in Dt. 33:29 which culminates in the victory of Israel over the hostile nations.

develop a realisation and acceptance of YHWH's royal reign, which ultimately culminates in the psalmist's explication of trust in YHWH's Kingship. Both psalms present the reader with a mixture of literary forms and both psalms share an all-pervasive theme, namely: The nature of the universal Kingship and rule of YHWH. All sub-themes serve the purpose of emphasising this one central theme. The shared sub-themes are:

- YHWH's omniscience as fortification and instruction. (Pss. 139:1-6; 144:1-2)
- YHWH's inescapable presence. (Pss. 139:7-12; 144:5-8)
- Dependence on YHWH's divine guardianship. (Pss. 139:13-18; 144:3-4)
- Protest for aid against the vanity of enemies. (Pss. 139:19-22; 144:9-11)
- The profession of trust in YHWH's universal Kingship and rule. (Pss. 139:23-24; 144:12-15).

Psalms 139 and 144 aids the transition from an appeal for protection against the threat of enemies (Pss. 140-143), to the celebration of YHWH as divine King and guardian (Pss. 138 and 145), by providing a comprehensive description of YHWH's universal Kingship, and aiding the psalmist's realisation of what this divine rule entails.



5.3 Semantic profile of final davidic *Psalter*

The fifth and final davidic *Psalter* stands apart from the rest of Book V employing its unique linguistic profile. To fully grasp what the writers and editors of this final davidic collection attempts to communicate with its readers, it is beneficial to examine dominant lexemes, as recurring vocabulary alerts us to the author's and editor's primary motives and highlights the dominant discourse and themes in the collection.

The final davidic *Psalter* seems to resonate with the rest of the Book of Psalms regarding the presence of antagonists. Every psalm in this collection presents the reader with a reference to entities that stand in opposition to the psalmist and/or the nation of Israel. Even Psalm 145, a psalm dominated by the psalmist's desire to continually praise YHWH, does not refrain from mentioning the wicked. In Psalms 138-145 the psalmist boldly declares animosity toward the opposition and revoke YHWH's biased interference in the situation. A closer look at the dominant lexemes descriptive of these antagonists will provide a linguistic insight into the nature of the psalmist's adversaries, the nature of their attack and the stance that the psalmist takes against them.

The final davidic *Psalter* depicts the psalmist in distress. In Psalm 140 we find the psalmist pleading to be delivered from **חַמְסִים מֵאִישׁ** (violent men). The psalmist of Psalm 141 seeks deliverance from **פְּעֻלֵי־אֲוֹן** (evil-doers), while in Psalm 142 the pursuit of **כִּי מִרְדְּפֵי** (my persecutors) is bewailed. Psalms 138 depicts the psalmist's opposition as **כָּל־מְלֻכֵי־אֲרָץ** (all the kings of the earth), while Psalm 144 refer to them as **בְּנֵי נֹכַר** (sons of a foreign land), thus rendering the psalmist's attackers as foreign imperial powers.

Two words, however, remain dominant in the description of the antagonist in the final davidic *Psalter*: **אֵיב** (enemy) and **רָשָׁע** (wicked).³¹¹ These terms appear with great

³¹¹ The term **אֵיב** (enemy) appears a total of seventy-four times in the *Psalter*, while the term **רָשָׁע** (wicked) is seen a total of eighty-eight times.

frequency in the final davidic collection. The term אֵיב (enemy) appears a total of five times (Pss. 138:7; 139:22; 143:3, 9, 12) and the term רָשָׁע (wicked) is seen a total of six times (Pss. 139:19; 140:5, 9; 141:4, 10; 145:20). Croft (1987:20) provide some guidance as to how these two terms should be understood: The term רָשָׁע and its plural רָשָׁעִים (wicked) usually presents no direct threat to the psalmist and the psalmist often just petitions for the judgement of the wicked. The opposite is true of the term אֵיב and its plural אֵיבֵי (enemies) who always seem to antagonise the psalmist and from whom the psalmist pleads with YHWH for deliverance. Conclusively, the wicked are primarily identified in terms of their relation to YHWH, while the enemies are identified in terms of their relation to the psalmist.

In nearly every case, in the final davidic *Psalter*, the lexemes associated with the רָשָׁע (wicked), serve to illustrate evil related by way of intentions. In Psalm 140 the wicked are described as people who חָשַׁב (think/devise) evil plans in their hearts to trip the feet of the psalmist (v. 5). The psalmist then petitions YHWH not to grant the wicked their נַאֲוִיִּם (desires). In Psalm 145 it is stated that those who love YHWH will be preserved, while the wicked will be destroyed (v. 20). Opposing the wicked to those who love YHWH, implicitly addresses the intentions of the wicked as hatred towards YHWH. On the other hand, the lexemes associated with the אֵיב (enemy) serve to illustrate evil related by way of actions. In Psalm 138 the psalmist petitions YHWH to stretch out a hand against the אַף (anger) of enemies (v. 7) suggesting that YHWH protects the psalmist against the active pursuit of enemies. Furthermore, in Psalm 143, the psalmist is רָדַף (pursued), דָּכָא (crushed) and made to יָשַׁב (dwell) in darkness by the enemy (v. 3).

Psalm 139 is the only psalm, in the final davidic *Psalter*, in which the terms רָשָׁע (wicked) and אֵיב (enemy) occur together. In verse 19 the psalmist utters the desire for YHWH to slay the רָשָׁע (wicked). The reason provided for this desire is the fact that the wicked misuse the name of YHWH. The wicked thus harbour evil intentions

towards YHWH. This statement is followed by a proclamation of the psalmist in verse 22, stating that those who harbour hate towards YHWH will now also be counted as the psalmist's אֹיֵב (enemy). The collaboration of the two terms in Psalm 139 thus reveals the dual-nature of the adversaries in the final davidic *Psalter*. The antagonists not only contemplate, but also exercise evil. Their attack is simultaneously aimed at the psalmist and YHWH. Anderson (1965:28) upholds that the language used in the psalms allows for flexibility of interpretation. A national and/or personal experience of the adversaries in the final davidic *Psalter* is thus feasible.

In the final davidic *Psalter* we find the typical antithesis of the wicked versus the righteous.³¹² Therefore, one cannot inquire into a description of the antagonist, without carefully considering the linguistic portrayal of the protagonist as well.

Six appellatives are used in reference to the psalmist (i.e. the protagonist). They are: שָׁפֵל (humble) in Psalm 138:6, עָנִי (poor) and אֲבִיוֹן (needy) in Psalm 140:13, יְשָׁרִים (the upright) in Psalm 140:14, עֶבֶד (servant) in Psalms 143:2, 12; 144:10 and צַדִּיקִים (the righteous) in Psalms 140:14; 141:5 and 142:8.

Allen (2002:313) states that the reference in Psalm 138 to the שָׁפֵל (humble) and the גְּבוֹהַּ (proud) should be understood as a general statement about the classes of people.³¹³ Dahood (1970:279) confirms that scholarship understands שָׁפֵל as a collective term. However, in Psalm 138 the psalmist's aim is not to side with a certain class of people as much as the psalmist is aiming to align with the favour of YHWH.

³¹² More than 90 of the 150 psalms make reference to the antagonism between the wicked and the righteous. Any endeavour to better comprehend the Psalter should seriously consider the relationship between the devout and their adversaries in the psalms (Slabbert, 2015:1).

³¹³ Eaton (1986:180) suggests that meekness was a purely royal ideal. The king had to strive to obtain an attitude of utmost humility before YHWH.

The term עָנִי (poor) is used throughout the Hebrew Bible³¹⁴ to express poverty. Sheffler (2015:2) suggest that there is no evidence of any systematic reflection on the meaning of poverty in ancient Israel, resulting in a wide array of connotations made with terms denoting poverty. The term עָנִי (poor) can refer to extreme insufficiency, however, it can also denote any kind of deficit, including spiritual deprivation. It is thus a fitting term to describe an impoverished spirit that is dependent on YHWH to provide divine relief. The term אֲבִיּוֹן (needy) belongs to the same lexical grouping and can be said of someone who is “socially weak” (Groenewald, 2007:433). In the psalms, YHWH has an affinity for the poor and the needy. They are also the ones who usually experience the provisional grace of YHWH (Prinsloo, 1996:478). In Psalm 140:13 the psalmist professes that YHWH maintains the cause of the עָנִי (poor) and secures justice for the אֲבִיּוֹן (needy). For this reason, being עָנִי (poor) and אֲבִיּוֹן (needy) becomes a virtue to be pursued (Sheffler, 2015:2). This is true for the psalmist in the final davidic *Psalter*.

The first three words used about the psalmist, i.e. שָׁפָל (humble), עָנִי (poor) and אֲבִיּוֹן (needy), is a self-reflection. With these designations, the psalmist does not necessarily reveal his/her social class or position. Instead, the psalmist is communicating a desire to be aligned with the favour of YHWH. For this reason, the psalmist affiliates with the meagre and the destitute and strives to attain an attitude of humility before YHWH.

The final three designations used about the psalmist approximates the psalmist's relationship with YHWH. In Psalm 140:14 the psalmist is considered to be part of the group, who is now referred to by the interchangeable terms: צַדִּיקִים (the righteous) and יִשְׁרָיִם (the upright). Here the psalmist clearly illustrates how the righteous and the upright positions themselves toward YHWH – the upright will live in YHWH's

³¹⁴ The term עָנִי occurs a total of seventy-five times in the Hebrew Bible of which thirty of these references is found in the Psalter. This term is used interchangeably with עֲנָוָה which occurs twenty-one times in the Hebrew Bible, of which twelve of these references is found in the Psalter (Groenewald, 2007:428).

presence,³¹⁵ while the righteous will praise the name of YHWH. Although these two terms correlate in denotation, Bollier (1954:44) duly states that there is no equivalent in the English language that rightfully conveys the meaning of the Hebrew word *ṣādīq* (righteous). Creach (2014:529) suggest that the common misconception related to the word *ṣādīq* is that it is regarded as a “legalistic expression of faith” with the purpose to invoke proper order. Righteousness is commonly misconstrued as a norm of conduct. However, in the psalms *ṣādīq* is a title designated for those who are dependent on YHWH. Bollier (1954) explains that, in the psalms, the concept of righteousness often forms part of triangular mentation in which salvation is invoked by righteousness, and God is the One who brings about both. In the psalms, righteousness is not equated with being sin-free, but rather with being loyal to YHWH (Kwakkel, 2002:291-304). This notion is strengthened by the psalmist’s conclusion in Psalm 143:2 לְפָנֶיךָ כָּל-חַי לֹא-יִצְדָּק (for in your sight no man living will be in the right). The psalmist admits to the knowledge that it is not possible for a human being to be justified in YHWH’s sight. Consequently, when the psalmist associates him-/herself with the *ṣādīq*, in Psalms 140:14, 141:5 and 142:8, it is not to infer anything about the psalmist’s social ranking or spiritual authority, but rather an inference to the psalmist’s relationship with YHWH.

The term עֶבֶד (servant) has a similar application. Tucker (2014:180) asserts that the theology of the poor is often accompanied by servant imagery as a means of structuring an identity that simultaneously deconstructs and constructs power. By claiming the position of a servant, the psalmist does not only emphasise subservience but also underscores YHWH’s power. In the psalms, the concept of deliverance usually accompanies that of a servant. Eaton (2003:468) suggests that by taking the role of servant the psalmist invokes divine faithfulness and favour. The psalmist asserts his/her powerlessness (Pss. 143:2, 12; 144:10) to be saved by the grace of an all-powerful God. This powerlessness of the psalmist versus the powerfulness of YHWH is further expressed in Psalm 145:14 when it is irrefutably stated that יְהוָה יִסְמְךָ לְכָל-הַנִּפְלֵיִם וְיִזְקֶךָ לְכָל-הַכַּפּוּפִים: (YHWH support all who fall and raise all who are bowed down).

³¹⁵ Cf. Pss. 11:7; 32:11; 33:1; 64:11; 97:11-12.

From the above exposition, it is evident that the six appellatives used about the psalmist serve to illustrate the psalmist's desire to be aligned with the favour of YHWH, pursuing virtues that will achieve this goal. Furthermore, the chosen designations underscore the psalmist's relationship with YHWH, not in terms of social ranking and spiritual authority, but as one of dependence. None of the appellatives is present in Psalm 139. However, the themes formulated by the use of these designations is detected throughout its content. In Psalms 139:7-12 the psalmist claims to forever be in the presence of YHWH, in accordance with the **יְשָׁרִים** (upright) of Psalm 140:14. Psalm 139:14 describe the psalmist's veneration and praise of YHWH, following the **צְדִיקִים** (righteous) of Psalm 140:14. In Psalm 139:19-22, the psalmist wilfully aligns with YHWH and pledges loyalty to YHWH, and in the final verses (vv. 23-24) the psalmist submits to YHWH's scrutiny and thus declares dependence on YHWH's all-powerful leadership.

Following the careful consideration of the evil antagonist as well as the protagonist in the final davidic *Psalter*, it is also necessary to investigate the lexical depiction of YHWH.

In the final davidic *Psalter*, YHWH is described by way of lexemes that communicates certain virtues. The first virtue, that plays an important part in describing the role of YHWH in the last davidic collection, is that of **צְדִיקָה** (righteousness). Psalms 143:1, 11 and 145:7 employs *ṣēdoqā* as descriptive of the character of YHWH – a virtue that is usually ascribed to a judge or a king (Kwakkel, 2008:664-665). When righteousness is associated with YHWH, it assumes a form of judgement equated to that of a monarch. YHWH's righteousness is thus an articulation of the nature and the consequences of YHWH's rule (Nel, 2000:317).³¹⁶ Bollier (1954:408) suggests that YHWH's righteousness should always be perceived as covenant-bound. In demonstrating righteousness YHWH is keeping to the promises of the covenant, namely preserving Israel – protecting Israel from enemies. Kwakkel (2008:664) insist that “saving” is not the end of righteousness, but only the means. The objective of

³¹⁶ Kwakkel (2008:664) underlines that YHWH's righteousness as ruler and judge implies that YHWH judges honourably and that such righteous adjudication is a blessing for those who submit to it. Cf. Ps. 98:9.

YHWH's righteousness is not to simply save, but ultimately to bestow blessing. Thus, YHWH's righteousness is displayed in YHWH's power to govern and save. In the final davidic *Psalter* these aspects of YHWH's *ṣēdōqā* is celebrated. In Psalm 143:1 and 11 we hear the psalmist's appeal to be saved, by YHWH's righteousness, from persecution. The psalmist pleads with YHWH to be brought out of trouble. However, in Psalm 145 YHWH is acknowledged in a governing capacity when the psalmist affords YHWH the title of **הַמֶּלֶךְ** (the King). The rest of the psalm follows as a celebration of YHWH's providential Kingship acclaiming the mighty acts (v. 4), the majesty (v. 5) and the great deeds (v. 6) of YHWH. In verse 7 the people joyfully sing of the King's righteousness. Nel (2000:317) asserts that this celebrated righteousness of YHWH embodies that which correlates to "the divine purpose for the world." The reference to the *ṣēdōqā* of YHWH thus acknowledges both YHWH's redeeming and a ruling function in Psalms 138-145.

A second virtue ascribed to YHWH is that of **חֶסֶד**. The Hebrew word *ḥesed* is translated with either "mercy" (cf. KJV), "lovingkindness" (cf. NAS), "love" (cf. NIV) or "steadfast love" (cf. NRS).³¹⁷ To obtain the best sense of the meaning of YHWH's *ḥesed*, one should refer to Psalm 136 in which the line **כִּי לְעוֹלָם חֶסֶדּוֹ** (for his mercy is forever)³¹⁸ is repeated twenty-six times, each time following an act of YHWH that actively describes YHWH's *ḥesed*. Groenewald (2008:1371) suggest that YHWH's self-revelation in Exodus 34:6 should serve as a pre-text to understand the reference to YHWH's *ḥesed* in the Psalms. Here YHWH is revealed as the covenantal God who is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger and abundant in love and faithfulness. Throughout the final davidic *Psalter* the psalmist acknowledges YHWH's *ḥesed* (Ps. 138:2 and 8), appeal to it (Ps. 143:8 and 12) and claim proprietorship over it (Ps. 144:2). Perhaps the most notable mention made to YHWH's *ḥesed* is found in Psalm

³¹⁷ In the book of Ruth the term **חֶסֶד** is most accurately translated as "covenantal loyalty" (Nortey, 2015:64).

³¹⁸ Cf. NAS – "for His lovingkindness is everlasting"; NIV – "His love endures forever"; NRS – "His steadfast love endures forever".

145:8.³¹⁹ Here the psalmist celebrates YHWH's Kingship as one that is abounding in *hesed* and consequently exhibiting the praiseworthiness of YHWH's royal rule.

In the linguistic portrayal of YHWH's engagement with the psalmist, two *lexes* appear with significant frequency. The first is: יָדַעַ (to know). The word *yodā* indicates, first and foremost, a theme of omniscience – nothing is excluded from the realm of YHWH's knowledge. Furthermore, *yodā* indicates the existence of a personal relationship (Pressler, 2003:92) and consequently conveys a theme of unrestricted intimacy (Hossfeld & Zenger, 2011:538) between the psalmist and YHWH. As a result, the final davidic *Psalter* presents the knowledge of YHWH as ambiguous – it is experienced as domineering and magnificent (Harrelson, 1975:62) at the same time. Psalm 138:6 posits that not even the haughty is excluded from YHWH's knowledge, a thought that should invoke trepidation for all whose thoughts, deeds and words do not align with YHWH's criterion. In Psalm 139 the psalmist is grappling with the notion of YHWH's omniscience (vv. 1, 2 and 4). In the conclusion to the psalm, the psalmist has come to terms with the fact that YHWH knows all and invites the scrutiny of YHWH. In Psalm 142:4 the psalmist finds comfort in knowing that YHWH knows and in Psalm 144:3 the psalmist realises the magnificence of YHWH by simultaneously realising his/her unworthiness to be so intimately known by YHWH. Conclusively, Psalm 145:12, the theme of knowledge is again conveyed through *yodā*, this time however, the knowledge does not belong to YHWH, but לְבְנֵי הָאָדָם (all the sons of men). Throughout the final davidic *Psalter* YHWH is coloured as the one who knows all there is to know about humankind – what they do, what they think, even how they were formed in the womb. In a climactic end to the final davidic collection, all humankind has finally come to the knowledge of the greatness of YHWH's divine Kingship and rule.

Another word that appears with significant frequency concerning YHWH's engagement with the psalmist, is the word: יָדַ (hand). Every time it is used about

³¹⁹ Groenewald (2008:1371) claims this verse to be a "creedal statement" favoured by the post-exilic Judeans to summarise the constant goodness of YHWH. Olbricht (2009:38) also underlines the fact that YHWH's *hesed* is constant by explaining that throughout Israel's history YHWH never gives up on them, even in their faithlessness YHWH continues to remain loyal to them.

YHWH, it is coupled with the pronominal suffix 2nd male singular “your” (cf. Pss. 138:7, 8; 139:10; 143:5; 144:7; 145:16). The hand(s) of YHWH is simply an extension of YHWH, metaphorically relating the intimate way in which YHWH takes care of the psalmist. The hand(s) of YHWH creates (Pss. 138:8; 143:5), protects (Pss. 138:7; 144:7), leads (Pss. 139:10), educates (Ps. 144:1) and provides (Ps. 145:16). Prominence is given to the hand(s) of YHWH by juxtaposing it to the hands of the wicked and the hands of the psalmist. In Psalm 140:5 the psalmist pleads to be kept **מִיַּדֵּי רָשָׁע** (from the hands of the wicked) and in Psalm 144:7 and 11 the outcry of the psalmist is to be protected **בְּנֵי נֹכַר מִיַּד** (from hands of sons of foreign land). The hands of the wicked set traps for the psalmist (Pss. 140:6; 141:9) and throw the psalmist down (Ps. 140:6). Finally, in an act of desperation, the psalmist states that: **אֶלֶּיךָ פָּרַשְׁתִּי יָדַי אֱלֹהִים** (I stretch out my hands to You!). In the final davidic *Psalter* the incapable hands of the psalmist and the conniving hands of the wicked is contrasted to the very capable and willing hands of YHWH. In Psalm 139, the hand (and right hand) of YHWH serves a dual purpose: to **נָחָה** (lead) and to **אָחַז** (seize). From this Pressler (2003:94) infers that the nature of YHWH’s hand is ambiguous – YHWH’s hand serves to care or to capture. Although the word **אָחַז** (seize) has certain negative connotations³²⁰ it can also be used in a positive sense, cf. Psalm 73:23. Here the seizing hand of YHWH is a comfort to the psalmist – a confirmation that YHWH’s presence will not forsake him/her. One could thus argue that the verbs used to illustrate the action of YHWH’s hands point to conditions rather than approach. If all is well with the psalmist, YHWH’s hand will serve as a guide. However, when the psalmist is in trouble, the hand of YHWH will act with greater urgency and seize the psalmist.

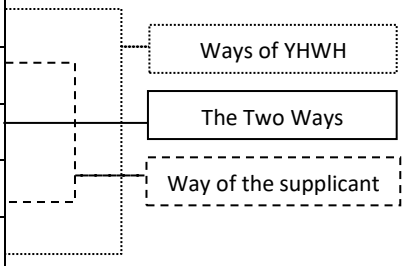
The two terms that are indicative of YHWH in the final davidic *Psalter*, i.e. **צְדָקָה** (righteousness) and **חַסְדֵּךָ** (mercy/goodness), linguistically conveys virtues expressive of YHWH’s character. Both imply a covenantal background, and both underline the dynamic of YHWH’s Kingship and royal rule. From these virtues emanates a personal

³²⁰ One is seized by fear and anguish (cf. Ex. 15:14; 2 Sm. 1:9; Ps. 48:7), by suffering (Job 30:16), by people/enemies (Jdg. 1:6; 16:21), cities were seized by foreign powers (2 Ki. 16:5), one could be seized by snares and traps (Job 18:9).

involvement in the life of the psalmist – knowing everything there is to know about the psalmist, and stretching out a helping hand. The psalmist reacts to this unrestricted intimacy by declaring the יְהוָה (praise) of YHWH (Pss. 138:1, 2; 139:14; 140:14; 142:8), calling on all monarchs of the earth to submit to and praise YHWH's royal rule (Ps. 138:4) and urging all creation to acknowledge and praise the supremacy of YHWH's authority over all creation (Ps. 145:10).

The culmination of the realisation of YHWH's Kingship and rule and the psalmist's dependence on YHWH's guidance can be seen in the manner in which the word דֶּרֶךְ (way) is employed throughout the collection. In a chiastic structure, the psalmist first acknowledges the praiseworthiness of the ways of YHWH. Then the psalmist comes to light about his/her ways and the fact that YHWH's precepts are the standard by which to live life. Central to these two ideas is the theme of the two ways (of Psalm 1). A schematic depiction of the "way"-theology in the final davidic *Psalter*:

Psalm	Theme
138:5	The kings shall sing in the ways of YHWH
139:3	YHWH knows my ways
139:24 (x 2)	Way of the wicked vs. way everlasting
143:8	Teach me the right way
145:17	The Lord is righteous in all his ways



Central to the chiastic structure is the psalmist petition to YHWH (in Psalm 139:24) to be probed in לֵבָב (heart) and שִׁרְעֵפִים (anxious thoughts). The inquisition serves a dual purpose: First, to rid the psalmist of the דֶּרֶךְ־עֲצָב (way of the idol); and second, to lead the psalmist in דֶּרֶךְ עוֹלָם (the everlasting way). The first way is “pagan counter-religion” (Hossfeld, 2019:3).³²¹ The second is the way that corresponds to YHWH's precepts. The way-metaphor of Psalm 139 sets the background from which all content of the final davidic *Psalter* should be understood, as it sets the tone for the interaction between the psalmist and the enemies.

³²¹ Cf. Pss. 97:7; 106:36, 38; 115:4; 135:15.

The unique linguistic profile of the final davidic *Psalter* provides some guidance on the primary motives and dominant discourse of the collection. The above exposition exposes a clear antithesis between the wicked and the righteous. Dominant lexemes reveal the character of YHWH's divine rule and the intimate involvement of YHWH in the life of the righteous. Furthermore, recurring vocabulary alerts the reader to the way-metaphor as a crucial part in the theological motif of Psalms 138-145.

5.4 Theological profile of final davidic *Psalter*

The structural markers discussed in the preceding sections translates into the theological programme of the final davidic *Psalter*.

Being placed in the mouth of David, the great monarch of ancient Israel, the final davidic *Psalter* conveys a royal theology.³²² Book V succinctly opens and closes with the foundation and the culmination of a re-imagined royal theology. The royal theology, as it is presented in Psalms 108-110 is rife with warlike language and imagery (Sutton, 2015:224). It sees the beginning of a shift in the depiction of David. Although still considered commander and chief of Israel's armies, his subservience to YHWH is emphasised by his new title as a priest-king. The apex of this newfound royal theology is reached in Psalms 138-145. Here the reader is confronted with a revolutionised royal theology – one that does not see David, the earthly monarch, at its centre anymore. Positioned at the nucleus of this newfound royal theology is YHWH as King. Zenger (1998:98) expressly describe this new royal theology as “the ‘king’ in service of the universal reign of YHWH”. Here the vivid imagery of a God-king (Stewart, 2002:109) and a priest-king (Emadi, 2016:98) is set alongside each other. Conclusively, the final davidic *Psalter* is coloured with a theocentric royal theology.

In stark contrast to Enthronement Psalms which solely focus on the kingship of YHWH, Royal Psalms portrays the king's relationship with YHWH (Nel, 1998:72). Psalms 138-145 conforms to this programme as the primary concerns of these psalms is to rightfully present the re-imagined relationship of the davidic dynasty (and its king) with

³²² Cf. Nel (1998:71-92) and Baker (2012:7-34) for an exposition on the theology of the royal psalms.

YHWH. To comprehend the theological agenda of the final davidic *Psalter*, we work our way from the inside out.

An important aspect of the royal ideology is the monarch's opposition to enemies (Nel, 1998:83). Royal theology in the psalms usually presents the reader with a majestic king who was handpicked and appointed by YHWH to the highest position among humankind (Ps. 2), on whose call YHWH rush to aid (Ps. 18), who enjoys God-given victory (Ps. 20) and blessing (Ps. 21), who fights evil by wielding the power of truth and justice (Ps. 45), who is the defender of the afflicted (Ps. 72) and does not condone any form of evil (Ps. 101) and who enjoys the privilege of a covenant relationship with YHWH (Pss. 89; 110; 132). The inner-framework of the final davidic collection, Psalms 140-143, finds the supplicant (David/the davidic king) appealing to YHWH for protection against evil oppressors. Here, not the power but the meekness of the supplicant is underscored. None of David's accolades is mentioned. Instead, David is found exhausted from constant persecution, pleading to be sustained by the mercy of YHWH. The once authoritative king now seems weak. Where once the davidic king was YHWH's mode of action against oppressing forces, now the king looks to YHWH to be guarded against such.

Moving on to the two psalms surrounding the inner-framework of the final davidic *Psalter*, Psalms 139 and 144, we see the psalmist's realisation of the extent of divine Kingship. Once again placed in the mouth of David (Ps. 144:10), this divine Kingship is essentially contrasted to human kingship and aids the psalmist's realisation of the superiority of YHWH's reign. The first characteristic of divine Kingship, that is expressly stated, is YHWH's divine knowledge of the psalmist. The psalmist finds peace in this omniscience of YHWH as it provides both fortification (Ps. 139:5) and instruction (Ps. 144:1). The second characteristic of divine Kingship that is accentuated, is YHWH's all-encompassing presence. At first, the psalmist struggles with the notion of YHWH's omnipresence (Ps. 139:7-12) but then accepts it, and even invites it in (Ps. 144:5). The third characteristic of divine Kingship that is realised by the psalmist, is the omnipotence of YHWH. It is at this point, for the first time in the final davidic *Psalter*, that YHWH's existence is compared to human life. It is stated that YHWH created and is thus intimately acquainted with every day in the life of the human being. However, there is more to the metaphor. In the psalms, the Kingship of YHWH

is rooted in creation and YHWH's ability to produce order from chaos (Roberts, 2002:679). Thus, by emphasising YHWH's creative omnipotence, the psalmist does more than just acknowledge YHWH as Creator, the psalmist also underlines YHWH's Kingship. This creative omnipotence of YHWH (Ps. 139:13-18) is further compared to the brevity of human life (Ps. 144:4). This comparison should be seen in coherence with the royal anthropology in Psalm 144:10. Even though the reinstatement of davidic kingship is memorialised throughout Book V, David's ultimate relegation becomes apparent through the self-assigned title of עֶבֶד (servant) of YHWH. This title, the only designation afforded to David in the final davidic *Psalter*, reveals a great deal about the position that David (as king) now resumes in relation to YHWH's Kingship. Here, human kingship is not just coloured as subpar to that of divine Monarchy, it is also equated to the morality and weakness of the king's subjects. Where, in the royal theology of the psalms, the king is perceived as more than a mere human, but as the elected בֵּן (son) of YHWH (Ps. 2:7), now the king is equated to nothing more than a human being whose days are like a fleeting shadow. Ultimately, we find the hypothesis in Psalms 139 and 144, that the life of any human being (even that of the davidic king) is dependent on the omniscient, omnipresent and omnipotent guardianship of a divine King. At the end of both psalms, we see the psalmist's realisation and acceptance of YHWH's universal royal rule when a profession of trust in YHWH's guidance (Ps. 139:23-24) and the results of such trust (Ps. 144:12-15) is explicated.

Following the psalmist's stance against enemies and plea for protection in Psalms 140-143, the psalmist realises divine Kingship and what this divine rulership entails in Psalms 139 and 144. This realisation leads to the acceptance of and an explication of trust in YHWH's royal rule. All of this is framed by the two hymns: Psalms 138 and 145. These psalms sing YHWH's praises and celebrate YHWH as divine King over all creation. It acknowledges the universal reign of YHWH and the dependence of the righteous on this divine Kingship. The presence of the two terms, טוֹב (goodness) and אֱמֻנָה (faithfulness), that are usually paired together within a royal theological framework, accentuates Psalm 138 as imperial and communicative of the sovereignty of YHWH. Similarly, the introductory verse to Psalm 145 is a flagrant admittance to its royal character, admitting to the Kingship of YHWH. In Psalm 138 terms such as נְדוּלָה

(great), כְּבוֹד (glory) and רוֹם (to be high/exalted) is commemorative of YHWH's royal rule that transcends the physical boundaries of the Jerusalem temple (Ps. 138:1), while terms such as עֲזָזוֹ (strength), הִדְרָה (majesty), הִדְרָה (splendour) and גְּבוּרָה (might) in Psalm 145 celebrates YHWH's Kingship as transcendent over boundaries of time. Both psalms celebrate YHWH's concern for the jaded and oppressed stating that YHWH looks kindly on the lowly (Ps. 138:6) and YHWH upholds those who fall (Ps. 145:14). Ultimately, it is the call to זָמַר (praise), in both psalms, that emphasises the acceptance of YHWH's royal rulership and illustrates the psalmist's celebration thereof. Through the activity of praise, the role of David is expressed. As שִׂמְחָה (joy) is associated with sacrificial feasting in Deuteronomy, joy is also associated with the act of praising YHWH in the Psalms. Praise, in the final davidic *Psalter*, can thus be equated with ritual (as it is depicted in Ps. 141:2). If praise becomes ritual, it follows that the one mediating the praise fulfils a similar role to that of the priests in Deuteronomy. Thus, ultimately, YHWH is celebrated as God-king, while David assumes his duty as a priest-king, serving and facilitating YHWH's worship under the Judeans and all other nations.

Whereas the Enthronement Theology centres around the idea that YHWH is "King above all gods" (Stewart, 2002:115), and Royal Theology focuses more on the idea that YHWH is the God who aids the Judean king, a theocentric royal theology asserts the theme that YHWH is King over all kings, nations and the earth. It does more than simply assert YHWH's sovereign divinity; it also endorses the theme of YHWH's royal rulership and supremacy. What sets apart the final davidic *Psalter* is the fact that the admittance to YHWH's Kingship is placed in the mouth of David as he pleads for protection and declares his dependence on YHWH. In Psalms 138-145 there is a deliberate subordination that takes place in the character of David. These eight compositions are related to each other as they correspondingly develop a theocentric royal theology.

5.5 Recurring themes in final davidic *Psalter*: protection and dependence

It is important to consider the prominent themes raised in Psalms 138-145, to understand how the final davidic *Psalter* fits into the storyline of Book V and the quest for the post-exilic community to find their new identity while fighting for survival after their return from Babylonian exile.

In Book V we find the Judeans returned to and living in their land, rebuilding the temple and re-establishing the worship of YHWH. However, they remained vassals to the Persians, so “they were free but not free” (DeClaissé-Walford, 2019:679). It is in this light that we read Psalm 137 as a vivid recollection of the suffering endured during the exile. Indicating the primary concern raised in Psalm 137 is the word זָכַר (to remember).³²³ Hossfeld & Zenger (2011:521) explains that memory or remembering was the directive given to Israel in Exodus 3:15 as the method through which they must preserve, not only their collective identity but also the identity of their God. Memory or remembering also served to aid the Israelites realisation of their covenantal dependence on YHWH (cf. Dt. 8:18) as it becomes clear in the final davidic *Psalter*.

The purpose of the final davidic collection is wholly revealed in the closing verse of the concluding psalm to this collection. The closing verse of Psalm 145 states: “*My mouth will speak in praise of the Lord. Let every creature praise his holy name forever and ever*” (v. 21). A statement that briefly gives an overview of the content of entire psalm, which can be summed up in a single word, namely: יָדָה (praise). Throughout Psalm 145 particular aspects of YHWH is being praised, including: YHWH’s Kingship, lovingkindness and righteousness. The unity of the final davidic *Psalter* can be seen in the close connection that exists between Psalms 138 and 145. The two psalms that surround the collection share the praise of the Name of YHWH (Pss. 138:2; 145:1, 2, 21). Both refer to YHWH’s Kingship, directly in Psalm 145:1 and indirectly in Psalm 138:4. Together they convey something about YHWH’s greatness and glory with “royal insignia” (Hossfeld & Zenger, 2011:601) such as גָּדוֹל (great), כְּבוֹד (glory) and רָם (to be high/exalted) in Psalm 138 and עֲזוּז (strength), הוֹד (majesty), הָדָר (splendour)

³²³ Cf. Ps. 137:1, 6, 7.

and גְבוּרָה (might) in Psalm 145. In both psalms, YHWH's affection for those who are exploited emerges (Pss. 138:6 and 145:14). Psalm 138:4 encourages all the kings of the earth to join in YHWH's praises, while Psalm 145:10 encourage all the works of YHWH's hands to do the same. Thus, both Psalm 138 and 145 not only promote the idea of YHWH's Kingship, but also the universality thereof. The multitude of similarities between Psalms 138 and 145 indicates that the final davidic *Psalter* is concentrically structured with these two psalms encircling its contents.

Central to this collection is the group of psalms of supplication, i.e. Psalms 140-143. As a group, these psalms display the psalmist's "social-ethical orientation" (Hossfeld & Zenger, 2011:601) through revealing the psalmist's relationship towards the wicked. However, it does more than that. It also indicates the psalmist's relationship with YHWH. All four psalms reveal a particular characteristic and theme of the final davidic *Psalter*, as all four psalms commence with a petition for protection from YHWH against enemies. The theme of YHWH's protection is strengthened with metaphors depicting YHWH as a refuge. The psalmist is described as covered in the day of battle (Ps. 140:8), as taking YHWH as מְחֻסָּה (place of refuge) in Psalm 141:8 and as מְחֻסָּה (shelter) in Psalm 142:6. The refuge-metaphor reaches a climax when the psalmist pleads with YHWH to be hidden in YHWH: אֶלֶיךָ כָּסַתִּי יְהוָה (I flee unto thee to hide me). Patrick & Diable (2008:23) suggests that the first commandment, i.e. "You shall have no other gods before me" (Ex. 20:3), lays the foundation on which laments are build. Crying to YHWH alone for help in a time of crisis conforms to the parameters of the first commandment, and consequently serve as a confession of trust in the still to be attained, protection of the One God. Fittingly, in the final psalm of the last davidic collection (Ps. 145) we see the manifestation of this protection when YHWH is praised for being near to those who call on YHWH (v. 18), for saving them who cries to YHWH (v. 19) and ultimately for protecting all who loves YHWH (v. 20).³²⁴ Thus, central to the final davidic *Psalter*, we find the theme of protection, highlighting YHWH as the one and only protector and guardian, who shields the supplicant against evil oppressors, and underlining the psalmist's confidence in YHWH to provide such fortification.

³²⁴ Cf. Ps. 145:20. YHWH's protection of all who loves YHWH is contrasted to YHWH's destruction of the wicked.

The four psalms that plead for YHWH's protection is in turn surrounded by four psalms that underline the theme of dependence on YHWH. As a structured unity, these four psalms all focus on the image of YHWH – more precisely, on the image of YHWH as King, as the two anchor psalms (Pss. 138 and 145) both touch on the premise of YHWH's Kingship.

Psalms 139 and 144 cannot be form-critically classified and categorised under a *genre*, nevertheless, they both effectively add to the concentric sequence of contemplation of the final davidic *Psalter*. After pleading for YHWH's protection (Pss. 140-143), Psalms 139 and 144 serve as a guide to the realisation of dependence on YHWH's divine presence and guardianship. YHWH's Kingship is related through motifs such as omnipresence (Pss. 139:7-12; 144:5) and omnipotence (Pss. 139:13-18; 144:4). However, the key to the psalmist's realisation of dependence on YHWH is the word יָדַע (to know). In Psalm 139 the psalmist seems to come to terms with the realisation that there is nothing that can be hidden from YHWH. YHWH has searched and knows the psalmist (v. 1). By implication, YHWH knows every action (v. 2) and every thought (v. 4) of the psalmist. Finally, in verse 14, the realisation of YHWH's perfect knowledge has taken hold of the psalmist, as the psalmist is the one now exclaiming "This I יָדַע (to know)!" regarding the magnificence of YHWH's works. As the realisation of YHWH's divine presence and guardianship have taken hold, the psalmist concludes in verse 23 with a petition to this knowledge, to be guided in a way that is to YHWH's desiring. In Psalm 144 a single reference is made to YHWH's knowledge, employing a rhetorical question: "O Lord, what is man that you care for him, the son of man that you think of him?" (v. 3). This rhetorical question is the proof that awareness of dependence on YHWH has taken hold of the psalmist, even though the psalmist is filled with unbelief that a God so magnificent and powerful still takes interest in the life of a mere human being. It should be noted that both Psalms 139 and 144 refer to enemies. In Psalm 139 the psalmist reports the presence of people who rebel against YHWH (vv. 19-22), while in Psalm 144 the psalmist testifies to the presence of foreigners (v.6-8, 11). This proves the fact that the psalmist's realisation of dependence on YHWH is not an isolated occurrence, but takes place amidst the threat of evil oppressors, and thus inevitably connects Psalms 139 and 144 to the crisis experienced in Psalms 140-143.

Following the realisation of dependence on YHWH's divine presence and guardianship in Psalms 139 and 144, we find the two anchor psalms of the final davidic collection. Both Psalms 138 and 145 is a celebration of dependence on YHWH. Both psalms are a dedication to praise YHWH on account of YHWH's goodness (Pss. 138:2, 8; 144:8) and faithfulness (Pss. 138:2; 144:18). In these psalms, it is not just YHWH's positive attributes that are celebrated. Psalm 145 explicitly praises and celebrates YHWH as King (v. 1), while Psalm 138 makes an indirect reference to YHWH's Kingship and rule over all the nations and kings of the earth. The realisation of the psalmist's dependence on YHWH in Psalms 139 and 144, now reaches an apex. The psalmist is not merely dependent on just another deity, the psalmist is dependent on the King of all kings – the King who exhibits transcendence and immanence in his dealings with his subordinates (the righteous) and their enemies (the wicked).

In the concentrically structured final davidic *Psalter*, two themes distinguish themselves as crucial to the storyline of the post-exilic community's quest to find their new identity, while fighting for survival after their return from Babylonian exile. The first theme is that of YHWH's protection. In this paradigm where the returned Judeans were free but not free, their struggle with enemy opposition and evil oppressors was an ongoing process. As a result, they put their confidence in YHWH to provide them with the fortification they required. The second theme is that of dependence on YHWH. Amidst the threat of evil oppressors, the psalmist first comes to terms with the divine presence and guardianship, and the realisation of dependence on YHWH's aid. The awareness of dependence on YHWH spontaneously spills over into praise. The psalmist is overjoyed at the knowledge of his/her dependence on the only One who can protect against evil oppressors. The final davidic collection, which forms the conclusion to Book V and the whole of the *Psalter*, is systematically programmed as a response to the concern of memory raised in Psalm 137 (Creach, 1996:100). In answer to the call to memory in Psalm 137, it conveys a remembrance and celebration of YHWH's Kingship (via the themes of protection and dependence). The remembrance of YHWH's Kingship is placed in the mouth of David and thus David (or the davidic king) becomes the model of this response.

5.6 Psalm 139 as a confession of dependence on and call for protection by YHWH

The concept of the final davidic *Psalter* can be perceived from the two themes that dominate its discourse. In a concentric, yet dynamic structure (Hossfeld & Zenger, 2011:524) the local-narrative of Psalms 138-145 first reveal the appeal for YHWH's protection, which is consequently followed by the realisation and the celebration of YHWH's divine guardianship and royal rule. An attempt to make sense of the divergent tones in Psalm 139 should consider its placement within this local-narrative of the final davidic *Psalter*, and the dominant themes that shape its meaning.

A morphological analysis of Psalm 139 distinguishes between three distinct persons and/or group of persons that play a pivotal role in the psalm: the psalmist, YHWH and the wicked/godless. A closer look at the psalmist's respective relationships with YHWH and the wicked will subsequently aid a better understanding of the reconciliation of the seemingly irreconcilable moods in Psalm 139.

The vast majority of Psalm 139, as covered by verses 1-18, addresses the psalmist's realisation and consequently the psalmist's acceptance of YHWH's nature. With the opening verse to the psalm, attention is immediately directed to YHWH's intimate acquaintance with the psalmist. The verbs חָקַר (to search) and יָדַע (to know) conveys YHWH's perfect awareness of the psalmist's ways – every action, every thought and every word (vv. 1b-4). Not only is YHWH intimately acquainted with the psalmist's inner- and outermost being, YHWH also shields the psalmist from all sides (v. 5). The psalmist's delighted, but slightly baffled expression, in verse 6: “*Such knowledge is too wonderful for me, too lofty for me to attain,*” denotes that these are new and somewhat perplexing acumens to process. Through acknowledging YHWH's divine scrutiny and fortification as an ever-present force, the psalmist also realises YHWH's universality. This notion is further strengthened with the two rhetoric questions raised by the psalmist (v. 7): “*Where can I go from your Spirit?*” and “*Where can I flee from your presence?*” Verses 8-12 continues to illustrate the spatial and temporal aspects of YHWH's presence all with the same conclusion: אַתָּה אֵלֵּי (there you are). These questions and subsequent answers sum up the all-absorbing theme of Psalm 139 as

a realisation of the inescapability of YHWH's universal presence (Buttenwieser, 1938:536).

Psalms 139:13-18 is a continuation of this line of thought, rendering the supernatural act of man's creation once again as proof of YHWH's omnipresence and omnipotence. The reference to YHWH as creative Creator is also a subtle reference to YHWH's Kingship, for in the psalms the Kingship of YHWH is rooted in YHWH's ability to produce order from chaos (Roberts, 2002:679). Where once the psalmist was just a גִּלְמָה (formless mass), YHWH קָנָה (created) and סָבַךְ (weaved) the psalmist into being – namely, producing order from chaos. Accordingly, by relating the magnificence of the psalmist's creation and birth, the psalmist makes a statement on the royal authority of YHWH: YHWH is King. Based on the psalmist exposition in the foregoing verses, the psalmist's realisation is not only that YHWH is King, but rather that YHWH is the universal King.

The first sixteen verses of Psalm 139 confirm the universality and Kingship of YHWH and consequently what this divine rulership and aid entails. The results of YHWH's universal Kingship are that: YHWH knows the psalmist and is accustomed to the ways of the psalmist; the psalmist cannot by any means escape YHWH's presence; nothing is hidden from YHWH, not even the psalmist's formation in the mother's womb. In verses 17-18 we find the psalmist's response to the inescapability of YHWH's universal rule. The psalmist considers YHWH's thoughts to be יָקָר (precious). The psalmist is so impressed at the thought of YHWH's intimate engagement in the life of man, that the magnitude of YHWH's רֵעַ (thoughts) are briefly considered. The psalmist pauses for a while to count them, but find that it is incalculable. Finally, the psalmist closes this section of Psalm 139 with the words אֲקִיץ וְעִמָּךְ (I awake and still I am with You) in verse 18. This language of intimacy illustrates that the psalmist has realised YHWH's universal Kingship and rule. The psalmist does not feel threatened by it but finds comfort in the knowledge of YHWH's proximity.

Moving on to verses 19-22, a new character or characters are introduced to the stage of Psalm 139. Where in verse 1-18 it was only the "I" (the psalmist) and the "you"

(YHWH), now the רָשָׁע (wicked) becomes part of the landscape of the psalm. In verse 19 we find the psalmist calling on YHWH to intervene in an insufferable situation. What the situation entails, is unclear to the reader. However, it is not the details of the situation, but rather the psalmist's reaction to the situation that is of significance. The petition of the psalmist is for YHWH to קָטַל (kill) the wicked. This is followed by a frustration-filled exclamation וְאֲנָשֵׁי דָמַיִם סוּרוּ מִנִּי (men of blood turn away from me!) Hossfeld & Zenger (2011:544) assert that the characterisation of “men of blood” can be found in the first two davidic *Psalms*. Here it is used about perpetrators who commit violence and murders.³²⁵ The psalmist plea to YHWH coupled with the psalmist's cry for men of blood to go away is thus allusive to the fact that the psalmist seeks protection from dangerous men. This petition has a dual purpose: First that the psalmist will not succumb to the attacks of the wicked; and second that the psalmist will not become morally corrupt by the influence of the wicked. After this plea for protection was directed at YHWH, the psalmist continues to accuse the wicked, stating that they plot against YHWH (v. 20). On this basis, the psalmist continues in verse 21 to intentionally align with YHWH professing that the psalmist hates those who hate YHWH and counts them as enemies.

Within the concentrically structured final davidic *Psalter*, Psalm 139:1-18 relates the theme of a realisation of YHWH's universal Kingship and rule. This then corresponds with the outer-framework (Pss. 138 and 145) as it moves to celebrate what is ultimately realised in Psalms 139 and 144, namely YHWH as the divine King and guardian. Psalm 139:19-22 relates to the theme of appealing for YHWH's protection, which corresponds to the inner-framework of the final davidic *Psalter* (Pss. 140-143) as it highlights YHWH as the one and only protector and guardian who can shield the supplicant against evil oppressors and influence.

Up until this point, the unity of Psalm 139 still seems obscured as its content range from a seemingly peaceful realisation of dependence on YHWH's universal Kingship (vv. 1-18) to an abrupt plea for protection against evil oppressors (vv. 19-22). However,

³²⁵ Cf. Pss. 5:7; 26:9; 55:24; 59:3.

the final verses seem to unite these contradictory tones with the psalmist's final appeal to YHWH.

In the two closing verses to Psalm 139, i.e. verses 23-24, the psalmist makes two petitions. The first petition, in verse 23, is for YHWH to examine the psalmist's thoughts and heart. By making this request the psalmist consciously submits to YHWH's universal Kingship that is characterised by YHWH's omnipresence, omniscience and omnipotence. The psalmist's realisation of YHWH's universal rule gave rise to the psalmist's wilful compliance with YHWH's Kingship. The second petition, in verse 24, is for YHWH to discern how the psalmist's life is leading, and consequently lead the psalmist in an everlasting way. By referring to the **דֶּרֶךְ-עֵצָב** (way of the idol) the psalmist is referring to the influence of the wicked. The petition to be lead **בְּדֶרֶךְ עוֹלָם** (in an everlasting way) is, in essence, a petition for protection against a life of idolatry and subsequent wickedness. Consequently, the petition in verse 23 thus resonates with the realisation of YHWH's universal Kingship and rule in verses 1-18, while verse 24 resonates with the appeal to YHWH's protection against the threat of enemy opposition and influence in verses 19-22.

As a result, within the framework of the final davidic *Psalter* and the themes that dominate its discourse, the seemingly obscured Psalm 139 seems a little less so. Even though verses 19-22 seems to be an editorial aggregation to Psalm 139, it serves to unite the discourse of the final davidic *Psalter*.

5.7 Synthesis

In chapter 5 the primary focus was the greater unit of which Psalm 139 forms a part of, i.e. Psalms 138-145, also known as the final davidic *Psalter*. In this chapter, the literary relationship that exists between Psalm 139 and the rest of the final davidic *Psalter* was assessed. This chapter aimed to inquire into the internal arrangement of the final davidic *Psalter* to investigate the placement of Psalm 139 within this particular collection, and to discern the relations that bind Psalm 139 in an editorial unit with Psalms 138-145. To accomplish this, the final davidic *Psalter* was scrutinised for repetitive semantic influences and theological discourse. Psalm 139 was then related

to these semantic and theological themes to discern how it fits into the final davidic *Psalter*.

A study into the composition and redactional grouping of the final davidic *Psalter* revealed that the meta-narrative of the *Psalter* can be divided into five books, which is further divided into smaller collections, or local-narratives. The local-narrative of Psalms 138-145, in turn, forms part of Book V of the *Psalter*, which again relates the nation's return from exile and post-exilic life. The final davidic *Psalter* can be discerned as a separate collection based on the *ydh*-psalms (Pss. 136-137) that precedes it and the *hll*-psalms (Pss. 146-150) that follows it. However, the main distinguishing factor, grouping Psalms 138-145 together in a separate unit, is its davidic superscripts.

Within a redactional framework, psalm titles assist the reader in navigating the editorial purpose and consequently the narrative of the *Psalter*. Therefore, in this chapter, an inquiry was made to the use of davidic designations and how the character of David has evolved throughout the *Psalter*. In Books I-III David features prominently as the vessel through which YHWH's covenant is realised for all of Israel. Then, despite David's almost complete absence in Book IV (the book of the exile), David's presence resurfaces in Book V in the form of historical references and superscripts. However, David is no longer the powerful monarch he once was portrayed to be. In Book V a new kind of kingship is imagined, with David (or the davidic descendant) portraying the role. Hossfeld & Zenger (2011:6) prompts the idea that the placement of two davidic collections at the beginning (Pss. 108-110) and end (Pss. 138-145) of Book V, is to create a frame that encapsulates the content of the entire book. Both the fourth and the fifth davidic collections are strategically positioned to underline a shift in royal regime – from davidic kingship to YHWH's universal rule. In Psalms 108-110 David the servant is brought to the foreground. In Psalms 138-145 YHWH the universal king takes centre stage. Psalms 108-110 (and Ps. 132) sees David (or the descendant of David) become a priest-king who will rule, not in a governing capacity, but rather in a subservient capacity. In Psalm 138-145 David assumes this priestly role when calling on all kings and their subjects to join in the praises of the universal King. Throughout this paradigm shift, YHWH becomes known as the God whose presence surpasses all boundaries, the universal King whose rule cannot and will not be limited.

This study revealed that Psalms 138-145 is structured concentrically. Psalms 140-143, at the centre of the structure, sees the psalmist appeal for YHWH's protection against the threat of enemy opposition. Psalms 139 and 144, that encapsulates Psalms 140-143, aids a realisation of YHWH's universal Kingship and rule. Psalms 138 and 145, that encapsulates the entire collection, sees the psalmist taking comfort in and celebrating YHWH as divine King and guardian.

In this study, a semantic profile of the final davidic *Psalter* revealed the psalmist as the protagonist. The psalmist is associated with the **שָׁפֵל** (humble), the **עָנִי** (poor) and the **אֶבְיֹן** (needy). These terms are used to describe the psalmist as someone who is socially weak and who is dependent on YHWH's care. The psalmist also use the following designations: **יִשְׁרָיִם** (the upright), **עֶבֶד** (servant) and **צַדִּיקִים** (the righteous) as a manner to illustrate that the psalmist is wilfully aligned with YHWH and pledges loyalty to YHWH, thus declaring dependence on YHWH's Kingship. The psalmist is faced with the antagonist who is primarily described as the **אֵיב** (enemy) and the **רָשָׁע** (wicked). These people exercise evil and simultaneously aim their attack at YHWH as well as the psalmist. The character of YHWH is portrayed using the virtues of **צְדָקָה** (righteousness) and **חַסְדֹּד** (mercy/goodness) – themes of YHWH's Kingship and royal rule. YHWH is described as the One who knows all there is to know about the psalmist, who stretches out a **יָד** (hand) to aid and protect the psalmist and who leads the psalmist in the everlasting **דֶּרֶךְ** (way).

This study has found that structural markers in the final davidic *Psalter* translate into a theocentric royal theology. Where a royal theology focuses on the idea that YHWH is the God who aids the Judean king, a theocentric royal theology suggests that YHWH is the sovereign King appointed over all kings (including the Judean king). What sets apart the final davidic *Psalter* from other royal psalms that conveys a royal theology, is the fact that this admittance to YHWH's Kingship is placed in the mouth of David – the David that pleads for protection and declares his dependence on YHWH. Through the theocentric royal theology conveyed in Psalms 138-145, a deliberate subordination of the character of David can be seen.

Throughout this study, two prominent themes arise in the final davidic *Psalter*, the themes of protection and dependence. In the central collection (Pss. 140-143) the psalmist is being persecuted. The psalmist therefore, turns to YHWH to be covered in the day of battle and to be the psalmist's place of refuge. Central to the final davidic *Psalter*, we find the theme of protection, highlighting YHWH as the one and only protector and guardian, who shields the supplicant against evil oppressors, and underlining the psalmist's confidence in YHWH to provide such fortification. Amidst the threat of evil oppressors, the psalmist however, realises dependence on YHWH to provide fortification (Pss. 139 and 144) and subsequently expounds this realisation into praise for YHWH's Kingship (Pss. 138 and 145).

Finally, this study concludes with a comparison that is drawn between Psalm 139 and the dominant themes that arise from an extensive exposition on the final davidic *Psalter*. This comparison revealed that Psalm 139:1-18 relates to the theme of a realisation of YHWH's universal kingship and rule, while Psalms 139:19-22 relates to the theme of appealing for YHWH's protection. A further, subtler comparison between the final verses of Psalm 139 and the final davidic *Psalter*, was revealed. Through the psalmist's request in verse 23 to be examined by YHWH, the psalmist consciously submits to the universal Kingship of YHWH. While the psalmist's request for YHWH to discern the psalmist's way and lead the psalmist in an everlasting way is a petition for protection against the influence of the wicked.

This chapter revealed through an extensive exposition on Psalms 138-145, that Psalm 139 is a comfortable fit for the final davidic *Psalter*. Psalm 139 relates to the dominant themes of dependence and protection, as displayed in the concentric structure of Psalms 138-145. The fact that both themes occur in Psalm 139 may attest to a redactional altering of the psalm to ensure fluidity in the transition from Psalm 138, which carries the theme of celebration of YHWH's Kingship, to Psalm 140, which initiates the theme of appealing for protection from YHWH. The repetition of the two dominant themes of the final davidic *Psalter* in the concluding verses of Psalm 139, further strengthens an argument for purposeful editorial activity in the composition and redactional grouping of the final davidic *Psalter*.

CHAPTER 6

PSALM 139 AND BOOK V (PSS. 107-150)

6.1 Introduction

Chapter 6 focuses on the still greater unit of psalms of which Psalm 139 forms a part of. For the better part of history, individual psalms were approached based on *genre* (psalm-type) and *Sitz in Leben* (how/where the psalm was employed in the religious life of ancient Israel). Although this approach to the psalms has led to the accumulation of plenty of discursive and illuminative information on the individual psalms,³²⁶ its greatest shortfall is the fact that it isolates psalms as individual entities and thus repudiates any interconnectedness of the psalms that are not based solely on the type and/or usage. With the timely dawn of a new era, the focus of psalm research has shifted from individual psalms to the organisation of psalms. Under the influence of Gerald H. Wilson, scholarship has recognised that, when studying the *Psalter* or any part of it, one should be on the lookout for any indicators that communicate shape and consequently inquire into the significance of this communicated form. Thus, when a psalm is studied, it should be investigated with proper regard to the collections in which it is rooted. The era in which psalm studies currently finds itself is one where the complex literary structure of the *Psalter* presents the reader with illuminating clues to the comprehension of the parts as well as the whole of the *Psalter*.

In the preceding chapter, the literary unit of Psalms 138-145 was explored to better grasp the literary relationship that exists between Psalm 139 and the rest of the final davidic *Psalter*. The aim was to better understand the positioning of Psalm 139 in the final davidic *Psalter* through inquiring into the composition and redactional grouping of

³²⁶ It is necessary to note, as Mays (1993:14) rightfully states, that any description of the character of the psalms, would be impossible if it was not for the work of Herman Gunkel and Sigmund Mowinckel who laid the foundation for a better understanding of the individual psalms. We are obliged to give credit where credit is due, for it would be impossible to derive the narrative of the *Psalter* if the foundational work for the understanding of individual psalms were lacking. However, Brueggemann (1993:28) insists that, even though these works are foundational, it is no longer adequate to serve as basis from which we discern the narrative of the *Psalter*.

Psalms 138-145. Attention was given to the semantic profile, as well as the theological outline, of the final davidic *Psalter* to better understand the content and meaning of Psalm 139. The present chapter builds forth on this knowledge by further inquiring into the relationship that Psalm 139 shares with the still greater unit of psalms in which it is positioned.

When studying Psalm 139, it is inevitable to investigate its position within the largest unit in which it is placed, namely Book V of the *Psalter*. In this chapter, the literary relationship that exists between Psalm 139 and the rest of Book V is assessed. To understand more clearly the positioning of Psalm 139 in Book V of the *Psalter*, the composition and redactional grouping of Psalms 107-150 will be considered. This further entails an exploration of the semantic profile of Book V. This study will also attempt to discern a theological outline of Psalms 107-150 to come to a better understanding of the theological framework that contributes form and meaning to the content of Psalm 139.

This chapter aims to further delve into the content, form and meaning of Psalm 139, considering the recent trend in psalm studies indicating that the current form of the *Psalter* is the result of editorial organisation. The objective of this chapter is to inquire into the arrangement of Book V of the *Psalter*, with the purpose of better understanding the placement of Psalm 139 within this broader collection. This study further aims to determine the potential relationship that binds Psalm 139 in an editorial entity with Psalms 107-150.

In this chapter, the internal arrangement of Book V will be scrutinised to detect repetitive semantic influences. A theological profile of Psalms 107-150 will be examined to reveal the theological discourse of this collection. Psalm 139 will then be compared to these semantic and theological features of Book V to come to a better understanding of the ambiguous nature of the psalms. This chapter asks the question: What is the purpose of positioning Psalm 139 in Book V of the *Psalter*, and how does it contribute to a better understanding of the contentious nature of Psalm 139?

6.2 Composition and redactional grouping of Book V

The *Psalter* is more than mere songs and prayers. It reflects a history of development which can be seen through the presence of collections throughout the *Psalter* (Childs, 1979:511).³²⁷ In essence, one can say that the *Psalter* is a collection of collections. The fluidity of the larger collections is determined by the arrangement of a host of smaller collections. Ballhorn (2004:361) insists that there exists a mutual dialogue between collections and that all themes in the *Psalter* coincide. The *Psalter* is introduced by Psalms 1 and 2³²⁸ by the themes of the Torah and the Kingship of YHWH (Mays, 1993:16). These themes remain normative and serve as a directive for the rest of the *Psalter*, which is subsequently divided into a five-book structure with “evidence of theological and literary shaping of materials” (Wilson, 1993:42).

The five-part division of the *Psalter*, as indicated by a series of doxologies³²⁹ serves as an indication of editorial organisation. Wherever redactional activity can be discerned one must assume motive. Wilson (1993:75) suggests that the objective of the *Psalter* in its final form is to address the failure of the davidic covenant in the light of the exile and to petition YHWH’s restoration of the once flourishing davidic kingdom. The first three books of the *Psalter* raise the problem of the failure of the davidic covenant and Zion theology,³³⁰ although the flame of hope is never entirely doused (McCann, 1993:105). Westermann (1981:250-258) asserts that Books I-III is coloured by a sombre tone as laments dominate the narrative of the *Psalter*, especially at the end of Book III, where the psalmist doubts and questions YHWH (Howard, 1993:110). Book IV presents a turning point for the story of the *Psalter* as a reliable voice from Israel’s past arbitrates the nation’s fate. Moses makes an appearance in the *Psalter*

³²⁷ Some of the collections in the *Psalter* includes: The Psalms of David, the Psalms of Korah, the Psalms of Asaph, the Songs of Ascent, the Kingship Psalms, and the Hallelujah-Psalms.

³²⁸ Miller (1993:84-85) discuss the points of debate surrounding the relationship between Pss. 1 and 2. It is argued that the unity of the psalms is undeniable. Arguments made indicating that the two psalms possibly formed a single composition at one time, includes: First, the lack of superscription ascribed to Ps. 2, which is unusual in Book I and only occur in two other instances (Pss. 10 and 33) in which both psalms is intrinsically linked to its predecessor; Second, the beginning of Ps. 1 and the ending of Ps. 2 form an *inclusio* linking the psalms together; Third, there are various linguistic collections that links both psalms together.

³²⁹ Cf. footnote 240.

³³⁰ Cf. McCann (1993:93-107) for an exposition on the editorial purpose of the first three books of the Hebrew *Psalter*.

to remind the nation that it is not the revival of the davidic monarchy that should consume their desires, but that there is something, or rather someone else, that should hold the primary place in their thoughts and longings (Wallace, 2007:88). In Book IV, the reader witnesses the initiation of the reorientation of the nation. The post-exilic community's thoughts and desires are redirected from the davidic monarchy to the Torah and the Kingship of YHWH that existed long before the davidic monarchy and covenant. Gillingham (2008:210) states that Psalms 90-150 (i.e. Books IV and V) reimburses the shattered hopes of the exiled people by placing the focus back on YHWH's reign and the prominence of a virtuous existence.

The refocusing of hope that is initiated in Book IV, reaches a climax in Book V. Book V is the largest unit in the entire *Psalter*, consisting of a total of forty-four psalms (Pss. 107-150), incidentally making its analysis most challenging. During the last three decades, much has been contributed to the study of the composition and redactional grouping of Book V of the *Psalter*.

i. Current research on the composition and redactional grouping of Book V

The following is a brief overview of what studies have yielded thus far regarding the editorial composition of Book V as well as the theological perspectives presented by this unit.

The work of Gerald Wilson gave momentum to the consideration of the editorial unity and framework of the *Psalter* and each of its five books. It thus comes as no surprise that his work also served as an impetus for the consideration of Book V. Wilson (1985:220-227) suggested that the editorial strategy for Book V of the *Psalter* is to divert Israel's hope away from human kingship (which is the focus of Books I-III), to divine rule. The primary evidence for this assumed editorial strategy is the placement of the two davidic collections at the beginning (Pss. 108-110) and end (Pss. 138-145) of Book V. This strategic placement of the final two davidic collections frames the content of Book V with the response of David, the earthly monarch, to divine kingship - David becomes the model for the response to the concerns raised in the psalms that precede Book V. In his 1993 article Wilson (1993:78-79) refined his thesis. This time

he underlines the usage of the הלל (*hll*) and ידה (*ydh*) verbs as markers indicating separate sections in Book V. Book V then consists of an overarching davidic frame (Pss. 107-117 and 136-145), which surrounds the central wisdom frame (Pss. 118-135). Essential to the wisdom frame is the substantial acrostic Psalm 119 that places focus on the Torah. Wilson (1993:79) does not consider Psalms 146-150 (the final Hallel) as part of Book V, but rather as the conclusion to the entire *Psalter*. The aim of Book V is thus to invoke renewed trust in YHWH's rule and to underline a realisation of dependence on YHWH's Kingship by means of keeping the restrictions of the Torah.

Like Wilson, Kratz (1996:13-28)³³¹ recognised a definite three-part structure in Book V that pensively guides the reader through the enigma of the exile to the restoration of the nation of Israel. The first part of this structure, i.e. Psalms 107-117, is aimed at the gathering of the Diaspora out of exile, like the gathering of Israel from the oppression in Egypt (Ps. 114:1-2).³³² The second part of Book V is a description of the gathering of the Diaspora at the sanctuary (Pss. 118-135) – their journey to the (restoration of) the temple and their entrance into the temple. Psalms 120-134 describe this way to the sanctuary as a re-entry into the Holy City through the gates of righteousness (Ps. 118:19-20) and through adherence to the Torah (Ps. 119). After the rebuilding of the temple is completed (Ps. 118:22-25) the individual/nation is permitted entry (Ps. 135:1-3). The third part of Book V, i.e. Psalms 136-150, serves the purpose of summarising the preceding two parts reminding the reader once again of Israel's history with specific emphasis on the deliverance from Egypt (Ps. 136), the return to the temple (Pss. 137; 138-145) and finally the praise that is due to YHWH for provision and protection (Pss. 146-150). All round, for Kratz, the final book of the *Psalter* centres around the theme of the realisation of the hope of restoration for the destitute.

Koch (1998:243-277) also suggests a three-part division of Book V. However, this division is not based on the linguistic indicators of the *ydh*- and *hll*-psalms, but rather the observation of the fact that only three collections in Book V are indicated through

³³¹ Also see Kratz (1992:1-40).

³³² For Kratz (1996:24) David is no longer considered in his capacity as a historical figure or the mighty king on which Israel once relied. Instead, in Book V, David becomes every man. References made to David is an illusion to both the individual and the collective nation.

subtitles. This marked collection includes Psalms 108-110 and Psalms 138-145 as “Psalms of David” as well as Psalms 120-134 as “Psalms of Ascent”. All other compositions that form part of Book V were seemingly added in between these collections to give the larger unit a hymnic undertone. This so-called hallelujah-psalms includes Psalms 111-118, 135-136 and 146-150. This point of view does not account for Psalms 119 and 137 which undeniably adds to the theological shaping of the book.

Goulder (1998:13-17) is also supportive of the three-part division of Book V of the *Psalter*. However, differing from his predecessors, Goulder argues that Psalms 120-134, being the only psalms in the *Psalter* with the heading שִׁיר הַמַּעֲלוֹת (a song of ascents) is indicative for a three-part division as it clearly forms a unit and thus serves as a pivotal point separating the two unequally structured collections on either side of it. This subdivision is then validated by some shared features between the first and third groups. Both Psalms 107 and 137 are psalms in remembrance of the return from exile. This is followed by a davidic series (Pss. 108-110 and 138-145) after which acrostic psalms ensues (Pss. 111-112 and 145). After these, follow the final parallelism in the hallelujah-psalms that closes each division (Pss. 113-118 and 146-150). Goulder (1998:15) extends this parallelism and by implication the parameters of what is universally accepted as Book V, by adding that Psalms 105-106 relate to Psalm 107 in both theme and language. If Psalms 105-106, which are two historical psalms relating YHWH’s provision and protection of Israel, is added to the beginning of Book V, it would parallel Psalms 135-136, the only other pair of historical psalms in the *Psalter*. Another extension made to the traditionally known Book V of the *Psalter* is to accommodate Psalm 119 which has no equal in the rest of Book V. Goulder (1998:16) accounts for this deficiency in the final book of the *Psalter*, by arguing that Psalm 1 is the only other psalm which touches on the subject of the Torah with the purpose and intensity equal to that of Psalm 119. Divided by the Psalms of Ascent, the paralleled first and third parts of Book V, that occur on either side of Psalms 120-134, can be visually illustrated as follows:

Part one of Book V of the <i>Psalter</i>	Shared similarities	Part three of Book V of the <i>Psalter</i>
105-106	Psalms relating the history of Israel	135-136
107	Psalms of the return from exile	137
108-110	Psalms of David	138-145
111-112	Acrostic psalms	145
113-118	Hallelujah-psalms	146-150
119	Praise of the Law	1

Based on this paralleled structuring of the first and third divisions of Book V, Goulder explains the narrative frame surrounding the Psalms of Ascent, as follows:³³³ YHWH created the world and called the patriarchs (Pss. 105:8-23; 135:4). YHWH saved Israel from slavery in Egypt (Pss. 105:24-38/106:7-12; 135:8-9/136:13-33) and leads them to the land they are to inherit (Pss. 105:43-44/106:34; 135:10-12/136:16-22). After being exiled because of their sin (Ps. 106:35-43) YHWH remembers the covenant with Israel and redeem them as YHWH's people (Pss. 106:44-46; 136:23-24). The people of YHWH were brought out of Babylonian captivity (Pss. 107; 137). However, everything was not smooth sailing and even delivered from captivity the people of YHWH experienced challenging and threatening situations (Pss. 108-110; 138-145). Because of YHWH's enduring faithfulness the people praise YHWH (Pss. 111-118; 146-150) and devote themselves to keep the Torah (Pss. 1; 119).

Zenger (1998:87-88) put forth some critical remarks on the above-mentioned expositions of Book V of the *Psalter*. Two of these critical remarks stand out. First, Zenger asserts that neither of the suggested redactional groupings of Book V adequately accounts for the connections which extend between the subgroups of Book V, consequently hindering the fluidity of the book. Second, none of the above-mentioned descriptions of Book V adequately accounts for the presence of the massive Psalm 119. It is either left out completely in their contemplation on the composition of Book V or added as a mere afterthought. All the expositions struggle to fit Psalm 119 into their account of the ordering of the collections in the final book of

³³³ Goulder, 1998:14.

the *Psalter*. Tucker (2014:8-9) further raises the critique that none of the expositions on Book V has thus far succeeded in fully addressing the threat of enemies and/or political foes that forms a cardinal part of the redactional and theological profile of the book.

ii. *Towards a holistic understanding of the composition and redactional grouping of Book V*

DeClaissé-Walford (2014:1-2) issues a warning to Biblical scholars to guard against dissecting the Biblical text to such a degree that it is impossible to reassemble the narrative unit it was created to be.³³⁴ This is a value that is deeply portrayed in Zenger's exposition of Book V of the *Psalter* and highly regarded in the relevant study of Psalm 139. Based on a critical evaluation of the pre-existing explanations on the composition and redactional grouping of Book V, Zenger approaches it more holistically. Due regard is given to the rounded narrative structure of Book V and how the parts fit together to create the whole. The proposal of Zenger (1998:98-99) is that the central part of Book V is arranged liturgically, while the outside is framed to emphasise the new role that the character of David assumes in this re-imagined paradigm. This point of view sees David depicted in an eschatological-messianic manner in the outer-framework of Book V, while its inner-framework liturgically defines the parameters of YHWH's reign and universal kingdom.

Based on the foundational work of Zenger (1998:88-99), the following summary aims to convey the framework of the narrative of Book V of the *Psalter*. To discern the meaning of Psalm 139 as part of Book V of the *Psalter*, it is necessary to get a holistic feel of the meta-narrative that is being portrayed through the compositions and collections of Book V.

³³⁴ DeClaissé-Walford (2014:1-2) builds forth on the metaphor of Polzin (1975:81-98) describing how traditional Biblical scholarship spends all its efforts to disassemble the Biblical text and forgetting that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts.

a. *Psalm 107*

As the opening psalm of Book V, Psalm 107 communicates its intentions from the outset. In verse 1 we hear the summons: הַדְּרוּ לַיהוָה כִּי־טוֹב כִּי לְעוֹלָם חַסְדּוֹ: (Give praise to YHWH for he is good; for his faithfulness endures forever!) According to Zenger (1998:88) the opening of Psalm 107 is indicative of the theme of the concluding book of the *Psalter*. All creatures are called to join in the praise of YHWH's חַסְדּוֹ (goodness/faithfulness) that will rule for עוֹלָם (eternity).³³⁵ Psalm 107 is a response to the concern of the exilic community raised in Psalm 106:47 to יִשָּׁע (be saved) and קָבְצֵינִי (be gathered) from among the nations. DeClaissé-Walford (2020:83) positions that Psalm 107 is the watershed moment that introduces the reader to Israel's return to and the provision of land by YHWH. The expatriates are brought back and once again provided with a home. Psalm 107 signals a new beginning for Israel and proceeds to celebrate it in what Hossfeld & Zenger (2011:2) calls a "liturgy of thanksgiving". The vessels of this thanksgiving are the Diaspora who are gathered, throughout Psalm 107, from four different destinations and saved from an array of afflictions: from wandering in the desert (vv. 4-7), from being captive in prisons (vv. 10-16), from being afflicted by ailments (vv. 17-22) and from being shipwrecked at sea (vv. 23-30). While the cause of the Diaspora's predicament is sin and rebellion (vv. 11 and 17), the source of their liberation is the *hesed* of YHWH (vv. 33-42). The repeated summons of the psalm is for all people to recognise the *hesed* of YHWH (vv. 8, 15, 21, 31) and to let it be known through praise. In the conclusion to the psalm, it is made clear that ponderance of the *hesed* of YHWH is the measure for the wise.³³⁶ In essence Psalm 107 is a celebration of the "universal graciousness and power of YHWH" (Zenger, 1998:89), that delivered the רָעִיב (hungry) and the אֲבִיּוֹן (needy) from oppression, misery and sorrow and brought them together safely מִיַּד־צָר (from the hand of the

³³⁵ Zenger (1998:89) notes that the praise of YHWH is expressed on a temporal axis.

³³⁶ Mays (1999:346-347) explains the dimensions of the term *hesed* in Psalm 107 that follows through the rest of Book V. First, *hesed* is descriptive of YHWH's redeeming acts of salvation in all kinds of challenging and even life-threatening situations. Second, *hesed* is the way that YHWH relates to the "sons of men". The primary basis of YHWH's relationship with people is by way of YHWH's goodness and mercy

enemy) and from foreign nations (v. 3) and turned a dire situation, into favourable circumstances.

b. Psalms 108-110

The first davidic collection of Book V is an extension of the theme raised in Psalm 107. In its final and redacted form, Psalms 108-110 are bound together as a trilogy based on shared themes (Sutton, 2015:12).³³⁷ This collection, surprisingly, sees the return of David, who has effectively been absent since the prayers of David son of Jesse was terminated in Psalm 72:20. Hossfeld & Zenger (2011:3) see the resurgence of David as an attempt to replicate the davidic “foundational era” – an era of stability, success and prosperity for the davidic kingdom. Psalm 108, which makes use of donor texts, conveys its ideological intent by its editorial adaptation of Psalms 57:8-12 and 60:7-14,³³⁸ as anti-imperialism. This collection sees the hostility that exists between Israel and foreign political powers that threaten their existence (Tucker, 2014:68). But amid distress, David becomes the example of how to heed the call of Psalm 107 to praise YHWH. In Psalm 108:4 we hear David committing to praise YHWH בְּעַמִּים (among the nations). The reason for David’s outpouring of praise is his acknowledgement of YHWH’s *hesed* (v. 5) and the knowledge that it is precisely this *hesed* that has and will deliver Israel from the power of enemies (v. 7). The *hesed* of YHWH is an exhibition of YHWH’s universal kingship and David becomes the leader directing the Israelites in recognition and praise of YHWH’s rule. Psalm 109 again reminds of the imminent dangers of the presence of adversaries. This imprecatory lament describes an unbearable situation (vv. 1-5) and aims to invoke YHWH’s urgent intervention (vv. 6-20)³³⁹ with an obscene amount of “ill-wishing affirmations” (Gerstenberger, 2001:257). In its final verses, Psalm 109 closes, with a profound pronouncement of trust in YHWH’s ability to intervene in a dire situation. Once again, David directs himself towards the

³³⁷ Sutton (2015:12) explains the unity of Psalm 108-110 at the hand of shared imagery that occurs throughout these psalms, such as: “right hand,’ ‘feet,’ ‘sceptre (staff),’ ‘washbasin,’ ‘footstool’ and ‘garments’”. Also see Sutton (2017:317-339), Sutton (2017:1-7) and Sutton & Human (2017:391-410) for a further exposition on imagery that binds these psalms together as a unit.

³³⁸ See Botha (2010:574-596) for an exposition on the editorial adaptation of Psalm 108 and the possible rationale behind the coupling of Pss. 57 and 60.

³³⁹ It is important to note the uncertainty amongst scholars regarding vv. 6-20. The usage of language makes it difficult to discern whether the curses in these verses are quotes from the enemies or curses pronounced by the Israelites to the destruction of their foes (Zenger, 1998:90).

hesed of YHWH (v. 21) for deliverance. The way the term is used throughout Psalm 109 (vv. 12, 16, 21, 26) illustrates both YHWH's ability to grant or withhold goodness and David's realisation thereof. Instead of being portrayed as the once mighty king, he was, David is now portrayed as someone helpless and reliant on YHWH's kindness and covenantal loyalty. David becomes the voice appealing to the remembrance of the davidic covenant. Responding to the lament of Psalm 109 is Psalm 110 in which David is invited to take a seat at the right hand of YHWH (v. 1). Two divine oracles (vv. 1-3; 4-7) visualise the davidic king alongside the divine King, ruling the world. Zenger (1998:90) points out the appearance of YHWH in both Psalms 108:8 and 110:1 as present in the sanctuary and seated on the throne, thus underlining YHWH's universal kingship. In Psalm 108-110 it seems to be a shared kingship between YHWH and David (or davidic descendant), although the parameters of David's kingship is re-imagined when he is afforded the title as a כֹּהֵן (priest) in the order of Melchizedek (v. 4). In Psalm 110 David achieves victory over his foes, but only due to YHWH's intervention. David now becomes the model for an attitude of dependence and trust in YHWH (Howard, 1993:52). Although he is still considered in a ruling capacity, his position is no longer one of power, but of servitude, thus rendering David the model of hope in YHWH for the post-exilic community.

c. Psalms 111-112

Following the davidic trilogy (Pss. 108-110) is the twin acrostics Psalms 111 and 112. From the outset, both honour the delegation of Psalm 107:1, 8, 15, 21 and 31 to יְדָה (give thanks) to YHWH. Both psalms are introduced with an emphatic הַלְלוּ-יְהוָה (hallelujah!) Zenger (1998:91) believes Psalms 111 and 112 to be a joined response to the divine oracles of Psalm 110. In the ten bicola that is structured according to the Hebrew alphabet, Psalm 111 eulogises YHWH's attributes and actions as a divine King, while Psalm 112 commends the man³⁴⁰ that fear and honour YHWH's kingship.

³⁴⁰ Sherwood (1989:50-64) makes an interesting suggestion that Ps. 112 does not refer to merely any man, but specifically to the king and how the king is to honour YHWH by keeping the Torah. While admitting that Psalm 112 could apply to anyone, Sherwood suggests that the divine attributes of being זָרָק (upright), רַחוּם (gracious) and רַחֲמִים (compassionate) were channelled to the people through their king.

Considering the interlacing themes and the reapplication of motifs, Prinsloo (2019:640) suggests that Psalm 112 is a *midrash* on Psalm 111. Brettler (2009:67) further asserts that the phrase **יִרְאַת יְהוָה** (the fear of the Lord) in the final verse of Psalm 111 is an alliterative indication to the Torah – for those who fear YHWH honours the Torah (as is stated by Ps. 112:1). Zenger (1998:91) points out that both Psalm 111:4 and 112:4 make use of a citation from the Sinai-formula in Exodus 34:6 - first, it is said of YHWH and then it is said of human beings. Psalm 111:4 states, based on the wonderful works YHWH has made, that YHWH is **יְרַחֵם וְיִרְחַן** (gracious and compassionate). Psalm 112:4 states that anyone who fears YHWH and delights in the Torah will also be **יְרַחֵם וְיִרְחַן** (gracious and compassionate). Thus, while the first of the twin psalms relate something about the nature of YHWH, the other relates something about the nature of the one who honours YHWH. Where the kingship of YHWH is strongly linked to YHWH's *hesed* in Psalms 107-110, Psalms 111 and 112 also identifies the compassionate side of YHWH's rule, but strongly underlines that the governing of YHWH is associated with the restrictions of the Torah and that anyone who desires to please YHWH will heed the Torah.

d. Psalms 113-118

This collection of psalms, also known as the *Pesah*- or Passover-Hallel (**הלל**) or the Egyptian-Hallel, is so-named because of its frequent references to Israel's exodus from Egypt and their subsequent nomadic existence in the desert³⁴¹ These psalms were sung during the celebration of Passover. According to Hossfeld & Zenger (2011:3), these songs were still sung during the Passover festival in post-exilic times, but this time it was in commemoration of the so-called second exodus from the slavery of Babylon and the nations.³⁴² Although this collection is tied up together through the theology of the exodus, it seems that there is little else connecting these compositions

³⁴¹ Cf. Pss. 114:1, 3-8; 116:3-5; 118:5, 10-13.

³⁴² DeClaissé-Walford (2020:121-122) stipulates that in the modern Jewish life Pss. 113-118 are still ceremonially recited during the celebration of Passover. Schonfield (2017:151) stipulates that Passover is the only festival in which Pss. 113-114 is read before the Passover meal and Pss. 115-118 is read after. The reason being that the first two psalms of the collection are the climax to the readings and after they are read a summons to praise God follows.

(DeClaissé-Walford, 2020:122). However, an underlying narrative is developed throughout these psalms. Psalm 113 opens by addressing the עֲבָדָי (servants) of YHWH. The same word that is used throughout the Exodus narrative to refer to the Israelites relationship with the Pharaoh is now used to refer to the Israelites relationship with YHWH. This underlines the major theme of the Passover celebration, namely, the passage from slavery under the Pharaoh to servitude to YHWH (Schonfield, 2017:153). In verses 4-5 YHWH is described as רָם עַל-כָּל-גּוֹיִם (exalted above all the nations) as YHWH הַמְגִבִּיהִי לְשֵׁבֶת (sits enthroned on high). This God who is enthroned in heaven reaches down to the dust and the ash heap to uplift the poor and the needy (v. 7). This illustrates YHWH's simultaneous elevation above creation and participation in it (Human, 2004:52). Ultimately, Psalm 113 narrates how YHWH, the High God, reached down to save Israel from slavery and oppression. Psalm 114 alludes to the crossing of the Red Sea. Here the sea is described as וַיִּזַּם רָאָה (seeing and fleeing). Verse 5-6 rhetorically asks what it was that made the sea and the mountains flee. The answer is provided in verse 7: מִלְּפָנֵי אֲדוֹן תְּוֹלֵי אָרֶץ (in the presence of the Lord, the earth must tremble). Where in Psalm 113 YHWH is involved in the life of human beings, now the psalmist illustrates YHWH's power over creation. In Psalm 115 the *hesed* of YHWH is once again cited as a motive for praise (v. 1). Furthermore, a comparison is made between YHWH and the idols of the nations (vv. 2-8) to invoke the trust of Israel in YHWH (vv. 9-11) and to ensure blessing for those who do so (vv. 12-18). The focus of Psalm 115 is to compare the exalted YHWH to the gods of other nations, and by doing so to underline the special place Israel holds in creation (Prinsloo, 2006:747). In essence, Psalm 116 is a description of the psalmist's indebtedness to YHWH. In verses 1-2 the psalmist exclaims praise for YHWH who heard the psalmist's supplication, followed by a summary of how YHWH saves the psalmist's soul from death (vv. 3-11). Verse 12-19 ends the psalm in the praise of YHWH for deliverance and protection emphasising the psalmist's indebtedness to YHWH. Potgieter (2019:409) illustrates the theme of Psalm 116 by the evolution of the phrase "I call" in the psalm. In verses 2 and 4 the psalmist calls on YHWH to intervene in a situation of need. This is then followed by verses 13 and 17 in which the psalmist commits to praising YHWH for assistance rendered in a time of need. Psalm 117, the shortest psalm in the entire *Psalter*, is a call to praise YHWH,

however, the call to praise is no longer only directed at Israel, but at כָּל-גּוֹיִם (all nations). The motivation behind the call to praise is, once again cited as the חַסֵּד (mercy/faithfulness) and אֱמֶת (truth) of YHWH. Snyman (2011:34) states that the coupling of these two terms is more than just a reminder of YHWH's character, it also serves to remind Israel of the covenant relationship they inevitably share with YHWH since the Sinai events. It is a reminder of YHWH's loyalty towards them – that consequently demands loyalty in return. Finally, Psalm 118, presents the reader with a ritual sequence for the arrival at the Holy City.³⁴³ DeClaissé-Walford (2020:145) positions that both an individual as well as a communal voice can be heard in the psalm. In verses 1-23 an individual voice rises to thank YHWH for rescue from danger after which the community of voices join in corporate worship that rises to YHWH from the temple (v. 26). Prinsloo (2003:417) asserts that even though the content of Psalm 118 references the historical event of the exodus, in Book V it is re-imagined and remembered considering the situation of the post-exilic community who was still fighting for survival even after liberation from the exile. In such a way the climax to the *Pesah*-Hallel is a celebration of the past considering the present situation. Prinsloo (2006:739) indicates that the spatial orientation of the Ancient Near East must be considered when studying the *Pesach*-Hallel as spatial orientation figured into their conception of themselves as well as their perception of the divine. When studied in this light, Psalms 113-118 does not seem to be a haphazard compilation of psalms, instead, there are indications of a migration of sorts that tells a story: The Israelites are rescued from Egyptian slavery (Ps. 113); they cross the Red Sea (Ps. 114); they are removed from foreign idols (Ps. 115); and moved to praise YHWH as Deliverer (Ps. 116); through this wonderful acts of deliverance Israel moves all nations to praise YHWH (Ps. 117); finally Israel arrive at Jerusalem (Ps. 118). On the other hand: YHWH is seated in heaven above, but bows down to aid the afflicted (Ps. 113); YHWH is present on earth (Ps. 114); and exalted above the idols (Ps. 115); YHWH reaches down to Sheol to bring Israel back to the land of the living (Ps. 116); YHWH's presence extends over all the earth (Ps. 117); and finally YHWH is found in Jerusalem (Ps. 118) the chosen city of YHWH's dwelling. Psalms 113-118 serves primarily as a reminder

³⁴³ Psalm 118 is the most referenced psalm in the entire New Testament (DeClaissé-Walford, 2020:143).

of YHWH's universal kingship, by recalling YHWH's saving acts and provision in the past and calling on all people to join in recognition and praise of YHWH's goodness and mercy. Second, it serves as a vestige of where Israel was and where they are now, due to YHWH's kingly guardianship. And third, it serves as a source of hope amidst trying circumstances.

e. *Psalm 119*

One cannot argue with the statement of Zenger (1998:96) that Psalm 119 seems foreign to the content and context of Book V. It has long been a matter of controversy amongst scholars how Psalm 119 fits into the composition of Book V. However, a closer look reveals that Psalm 119 not only shares numerous connections with its neighbouring psalms, it also prominently features into the theological purpose of Book V of the *Psalter*. As Psalms 113-118 were traditionally read during Passover in commemoration of the exodus, Psalm 119 is read at the Feast of *Šabū'ot* (the Feast of Weeks or Pentecost).³⁴⁴ Psalm 119 is awarded a very prominent position in Book V, in between the two liturgical collections (Pss. 113-118 and 120-134). The end of the *Pesaḥ*-Hallel sees the liberated people walk through the שַׁעֲרֵי צְדָקָה (gates of righteousness) into the presence of the YHWH. It is postulated by Hossfeld & Zenger (2011:4) that Psalm 119 is a contemplative encounter with YHWH. Furthermore, the acrostic Psalm 119 refers to Sinai, similar to its predecessors (Pss. 111 and 112) and its successor (Ps. 145). The reference to Sinai is a reminder of the Torah that was given to Moses, during the Israelites wanderings in the desert and their sojourning at the foot of Mount Sinai. Zenger (1989:98) sees this reference as steering a theme of adherence to the Torah throughout Psalm 119, implying that for the universal reign of YHWH (the God of the exodus) to rise, adherence to the Torah is preliminary. Hossfeld (2019:2) reckons that there is no way of getting around the idea that Psalm 119 deals with the Torah and its prominence in the life of the post-exilic community based on the fact that the term תּוֹרָה (Torah) is used a total of twenty-five times throughout the psalm. Psalm 119 is an admonition to the righteous to not only study and obey the

³⁴⁴ The Feast of Pentecost follows fifty days after Passover and celebrates the receiving of the Torah by Moses at Mount Sinai.

Torah but to allow it to be “character forming” (Reynolds, 2010:14). Adherence to the Torah becomes the means of accepting and honouring YHWH’s kingship.

f. *Psalms 120-134*

As only one of three groups in Book V with definite superscripts, and as the only group of psalms in the entire *Psalter* with the superscript *שִׁיר הַמַּעֲלוֹת* (song of ascending/going up), Psalms 120-134 is exposed as a meticulous unit. Millard (1994:41) suggest that these psalms were individually composed and later grew into a liturgical unit with the purpose of usage in the second temple era.³⁴⁵ Hossfeld & Zenger (2011:4) suggest that this composition was editorially completed around 400 BCE with the purpose to serve as a prayerbook for the pilgrims that came to Jerusalem and the temple in celebration of their feasts. Traditionally read at the Feast of *Sūkōt* (Booths or Tabernacles), these psalms commemorate YHWH’s care for the Israelites during their nomadic existence in the desert (DeClaissé-Walford, 2006:459). Prinsloo (2005:762-472) postulates that the *Šîr hama’ălōt* psalms converses the post-exilic community’s pilgrimage from exile (Ps. 120) to Zion (Ps. 134). For this reason, Psalms 120-134 is also known as the Pilgrim *Psalter*.³⁴⁶ Zenger (1998:92) maintains that the collection can be divided into three subgroups with five psalms each, i.e. Psalms 20-24, 25-29 and 30-34. Central to every group of five is a psalm that emphasises the particular collection’s theological views. The accents of these subgroups would then be: Psalm 122 – Jerusalem; Psalm 127 – the temple; Psalm 132 – David. Mitchell (2015:7) asserts that the common theme shared among the *Šîr hama’ălōt* psalms is their love and desire for Jerusalem and the temple located on the fortified Zion hill. For this reason, Mitchell (2015:13) maintains that the *Šîr hama’ălōt* psalms are shaped in a chiasmic structure, with Psalm 127 forming the central point to the collection. Psalm

³⁴⁵ Hossfeld & Zenger (2011:4) put forth the idea that “songs of Zion” were once a much larger collection that went through an editorial process in order to be recorded as part of the *Psalter*. This process implied four basic steps: First, the selection of a collection of psalms from the greater collection; Second, the arrangement of these selected psalms in an order that conveys a particular narrative; Third, the editorial aggregation of these psalms to constructively link them to one another; Fourth, the composition of a few psalms to supplement the narrative of the collection.

³⁴⁶ There is speculation on whether or not the *Šîr hama’ălōt* psalms were strategically grouped together to illustrate the fifteen steps ascending up to the temple building itself. However, Hossfeld & Zenger (2011:4-5) postulates that there is no concrete evidence to suggest such Temple-symbolism in Psalms 120-134.

127, a wisdom text, is dedicated to Solomon who was the builder of the temple.³⁴⁷ It underlines YHWH's provision and trust in YHWH's provision as the main themes of the psalm (Human. 2009:71-72). Thus, Zion draws attention as the place in which the universal King YHWH is seated. Consequently, it becomes the location from which the blessing of YHWH proceeds, and as a result, Zion becomes the archetype for trust in YHWH (Körting, 2006:135-145).

g. Psalms 135-137

This small collection of psalms find themselves nestled in between the *Šir hama'ālōt* psalms and the fifth and final davidic *Psalter*. It is often referred to as the Great Hallel and is meant to be sung following the Passover-liturgy, i.e. Psalms 113-118 as it celebrates YHWH as the universal king who provides and care for all creation (Hossfeld & Zenger, 2011:491). Similar to Psalms 105-106 at the end of Book IV, Psalms 135-136 provide the reader with an overview of Israel's history and testifies to the mighty works of YHWH. Psalm 135 starts in verses 1-3 with a summons to all the עֲבָדָי (servants of) YHWH who find themselves in the בַּיִת (house) of YHWH to יְהַלְלוּ (praise YHWH). This phraseology distinctly links Psalm 135 with both the *Pesah-*Hallel³⁴⁸ and the Psalms of Ascent³⁴⁹ and thus illustrates its continuation of the group of texts that begin with Psalm 113. Both Psalms 135 and 136 focus strongly on the following themes: the election of Israel (Pss. 135:4; 136:14, 16); the supremacy of YHWH as portrayed through creation and acts in favour of Israel (Pss. 135:1-11; 136:4-20); the inheritance of the land (Pss. 135:12; 136:21-22); YHWH's patronage of Israel (Pss. 135:14; 136:1-3, 23-25); and YHWH as king seated in Zion (Ps. 135:21) and seated in heaven (Ps. 136:26).³⁵⁰ Tucker (2014:112) adds the theme of threatening of enemies to both psalms, suggesting that Israel, even though liberated from exile, is still under constant threat of foes. Psalm 136 is presented as the

³⁴⁷ Cf. 1 Ki. 5-6; 8.

³⁴⁸ The phrase הַלְלוּ יְהוָה (Hallelujah) occurs in Pss. 113:1, 9; 115:18; 116:19; 117:2.

³⁴⁹ Ps. 134:1, the closing psalm to the *Šir hama'ālōt* psalms, opens with the call, echoed in Ps. 135:1-2, for the עֲבָדָי יְהוָה (servants of YHWH) who find themselves standing בְּבַיִת יְהוָה (in the house of YHWH) to bless and/or praise YHWH.

³⁵⁰ For a comprehensive exposition on the structural, thematic and lexical parallels between Ps. 135 and 136, see Todd (2015:86-87).

culminating celebration to the liturgical collections in the centre of Book V, i.e. Psalms 113-118, 119, 120-134 and 135-137, as it praises YHWH as the king enthroned in Jerusalem on Mount Zion with the repetition of the phrase כִּי לְעוֹלָם חַסְדּוֹ (for his mercy is forever). Zenger (1998:92) hypothesises that Psalm 135:2-3 were added to the psalm at the time of redaction to correlate to the call in Psalm 100 that כָּל-הָאָרֶץ (all the earth) should join in praising YHWH for YHWH's goodness, everlasting mercy and enduring truth. When Psalm 135 thus refers to בְּבַיִת יְהוָה בְּחִצְרוֹת בַּיִת אֱלֹהֵינוּ שְׁעֵמֹדִים (you who stand in the house of YHWH, in the courts of the house of our God) it is a reference to both Israel and the nations who now acknowledge the universal kingdom of YHWH. Psalm 136 relates to this motif in Psalm 135 by imitating the words of Psalm 100:5 as the song that is to be sung to YHWH by all the earth. Following these two community hymns, is a communal lament. In Psalms 135 and 136 (and all the psalms in the liturgical collections that leads up to this celebratory climax) focus falls on Zion. In Psalm 137, however, Zion is contrasted to Babylon. DeClaissé-Walford (2019:673) underlines the theme of Psalm 137 as זָכַר (to remember). Where the foregoing psalms highlight the dedication to Zion as the place of YHWH's kingship and rule, Psalm 137 highlights Babylon as the opposite. Hossfeld & Zenger (2011:518) concludes that Psalm 137 is a "backwards look" at the exile, urging the Israelites not to forget the past while they revel in the present joy of reviving Jerusalem and rebuilding the temple on Zion. Mays (1999:423) states that Psalm 137 is not a matter of remembering Zion while in Babylon, it is a promise to not שָׁכַח (forget) Babylon while in Zion. It is a promise not to forget the total desolation experienced while far removed from Zion – the city of YHWH. Goldingay (2008:60.) adds that the object of Israel's mindfulness in Psalm 137 is not the physical city of Jerusalem, but Zion as the place where YHWH sits enthroned on earth. In a time when the Israelites had already returned from exile, the temple was rebuilt and worship in the temple had already resumed, the triad of Psalms 135-137 aims to invoke mindfulness in the Israelites. It is a call for Israel to remember YHWH's redemption throughout their history, for, as DeClaissé-Walford (2019:681) rightfully asserts, memory is a matter of identity.

h. Psalms 138-145

Following the call to the memory of Zion is the final davidic collection in the entire *Psalter*, forming an *inclusio* with Psalms 108-110 around the content of Book V. In Psalms 140-143 we hear prayers for the protection of David who is still languishing under the threat and persecution of enemies and petitions YHWH's protection against external conflict. The psalmist is experiencing powerlessness but counts on the חַסְדּוֹ (mercy/faithfulness) and צְדִיקָה (righteousness) of YHWH to guard and protect against enemy opposition. Amid the despair, the psalmist realises dependence on YHWH. In Psalms 139 and 144 the psalmist realises YHWH's universal kingship and rule. Both Psalms 139 and 144: acknowledge YHWH's inescapable presence (Pss. 139:7-12; 144:5-8); realise dependence on YHWH's divine guardianship (Pss. 139:13-18; 144:3-4); protest for aid against enemies (Pss. 139:19-22; 144:9-11) and declare trust in YHWH's universal kingship and rule (Pss. 139:23-24; 144:12-15).

Psalms 138 and 145 then encapsulates the final davidic *Psalter*. Both psalms are an acknowledgement and celebration of YHWH's kingship. Psalm 138 serves as a response to Psalms 135-137. Psalm 135:1 starts with a three-part directive הַלְלֵנוּ (you must praise!) and Psalm 136:1 with הוֹדֵנוּ (you must praise!)³⁵¹ Responding to these instructions is Psalm 138:1 affirming אֲוֹדֶה (I will praise). Linked by their description of an exilic history and steered by the notion of a petitioner that is located outside of their homeland, both Psalms 137 and 138 refer to singing. While in Psalm 137:2-5 the exiles hung their harps on the willows as an objection to being forced to sing the songs of YHWH while in a foreign land, in Psalm 138:1 the psalmist openly expresses YHWH's praises, even in the presence of foreign deities. What makes Psalm 138 a responsory counterpoint to Psalm 137, is the fact that those who mockingly demanded the Israelites to praise YHWH (Ps. 137:3), now join in the songs they once demanded (Ps. 138:4). For כָּל-מַלְכֵי-אֲרָץ (all the kings of the earth) to join in YHWH's praises for all the kings of the earth to acknowledge and submit to the universal kingship of YHWH. However, in Psalm 145:1, placed in the mouth of David, is the words: אֱלֹהֵי הַמַּלְךְ

³⁵¹ Both these as verbs are written in the imperative form.

אֲרוֹמְמֶנָּה (I will exalt my God, the King). This is a recognition and a confession to not only the kingship of YHWH, but the exclusive kingship of YHWH. No longer is David positioned next to YHWH in a reigning capacity as in Psalms 108-110. Instead, David becomes the one who first responds to YHWH's universal kingship by openly praising YHWH and simultaneously calling all other rulers on earth to do the same. By the end of the final davidic *Psalter* David assumes the role, not as co-ruler, but as עֶבֶד (servant), thus surrendering all power to the exclusive and universal royal rule of YHWH.

i. *Psalms 146-150*

Praise of YHWH's universal and exclusive kingship starts in the final davidic *Psalter* but culminates in Psalms 146-150. This collection of psalms is called the Final Hallel because each psalm in the collection begins and ends with the phrase הַלְלוּ-יְהוָה (praise the Lord).³⁵² The verb הָלַל (to praise) is used in this collection a total of thirty-five times.³⁵³ Hossfeld & Zenger (2011:605) suggests that the sheer abundance of the use of this term throughout the Final Hallel illustrates this collection as the epitome of YHWH's praise. Psalm 150 is the final call to join in the praises of YHWH and summons this praise a total of thirteen times, incidentally rendering Psalm 150 "the doxological climax of the Psalm book" (Human, 2011:3). The progression of praise, as suggested by Hossfeld & Zenger (2011:605), is noteworthy: In Psalm 146 the psalmist coerces only his/her נַפְשׁ (soul) to praise; Psalm 147 sees the call to praise YHWH expanding to יְרוּשָׁלַם (Jerusalem) and צִיּוֹן (Zion); Psalm 148 summon the entire universe to praise YHWH but still pertinently underlines the special role that the יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּנֵי (sons/children of Israel) play in YHWH's praises; Psalm 149 praise is placed in the mouth of all the קְסִידִים (saints) to claim the entire universe as YHWH's kingdom; finally, Psalm 150 sees a so-called flood of praise that will fill all of creation in glorification of YHWH the King. The Final Hallel is meticulously associated with the

³⁵² Cf. Pss. 146:1, 10; 147:1, 20; 148:1, 14; 149:1, 9; 150:1, 6.

³⁵³ Cf. Pss. 146:1(x2), 2, 10; 147:1, 12, 20; 148:1(x3), 2(x2), 3(x2), 4, 5, 7, 13, 14; 149:1, 3, 9; 150:1(x3), 2(x2), 3(x2), 4(x2), 5(x2), 6(x2).

preceding final davidic *Psalter* in terms of the theme of the exclusivity of YHWH's kingship and rule. In Psalms 138-145 David becomes the leader in praise leading the post-exilic community in the acknowledgement of YHWH's kingship, fulfilling his role as priest-king who leads the people in worship of YHWH. Psalms 146-150 continues in this realisation of the exclusivity of YHWH's kingship. In Psalm 146:3-4 the psalmist admonishes him-/herself to not put trust in earthly monarchs for they are nothing but mere mortals whose time on earth and power are limited. Psalm 148:11-12 lists all the people that should acknowledge YHWH's reign and join in YHWH's praises, starting with the kings of the earth, the princes and the judges. Finally, in Psalm 149:8 the reader is witness to how the praise of YHWH as an exclusive king becomes a weapon against the kings and nobles of other nations. Thus, the Final Hallel is an expression and more precisely a celebration of YHWH as the one and only, exclusive king of the cosmos.

Heeding the admonition of DeClaissé-Walford (2014:1-2), the foregoing study attempts to get a holistic feel of the meta-narrative presented by Book V as it is portrayed by its compositions and collections and the way they were arranged in relation to each other. As a literary unit descriptive of a contemplative pilgrimage from exile to Zion, Book V represents a journey (Human 2017:76). The journey starts as the nation of Israel is brought out of Babylonian exile to Jerusalem and Mount Zion, the place of YHWH's presence and reign. Along with this so-called second exodus, the attention of the pilgrim (i.e. Israel) is directed towards the universal and exclusive kingship of YHWH. This is accomplished by a multitude of means:

- Psalm 107 reminds of YHWH's mercy and power.
- In Psalms 108-110 David comes to the front as co-ruler to direct the Israelites recognition of YHWH's rule.
- Psalms 111 and 112 eulogises YHWH's attributes and actions as divine king.
- Psalms 113-118 reminds of YHWH's saving acts and provision in the past to illustrate YHWH's kingly guardianship.
- Psalm 119 maintains that adherence to the Torah is cardinal to show acceptance and honour for YHWH's kingship.
- Psalms 120-134 place focus on Zion as the place where the universal king is seated and the location from which YHWH's blessing proceeds.

- Psalms 135-137 aims to invoke mindfulness of the salvation and restoration of Israel under the rule of YHWH through the first (Egyptian) as well as the second (Babylonian) exodus.
- In Psalms 138-145 David comes to the front again. This time, however, it is not to rule alongside YHWH, but simply to affirm the superiority of YHWH's rule. David becomes the first monarch to surrender all power to the exclusive and universal royal rule of YHWH, and he calls on the monarchs of all other nations to join him.
- Psalms 146-150 is the culmination of the praise David calls for in the final davidic *Psalter*. The *Psalter* ends in bouts of praise by individuals, by Israel, by other nations and the whole of creation in celebration of YHWH's exclusive kingship.

6.3 Semantic profile of Book V

Book V reveals a unique linguistic profile that separates it from the rest of the *Psalter*. Any attempt to better understand the narrative of Book V must consider the dominant lexemes and repetitive vocabulary that is indicative of its contents. What the authors and editors intended to convey through the dominant discourse of Book V is alerted to through recurring vocabulary and cyclical themes.

The first and certainly the most striking feature that distinguishes Book V from the rest of the *Psalter* is its shouts of praise for YHWH and subsequently its calls to join in this praise. The two-word phrase הַלְלוּ-יְהוָה which consists of the verb הַלַּל (to praise) and the proper noun יְהוָה which is the alternate form of יְהוָה (YHWH), is a high-spirited interjection of utmost joy that can be translated as: "Praise YHWH" or as it is primarily translated into most English Bibles: "Praise the LORD!" The phrasing הַלְלוּ-יְהוָה is most commonly transliterated into English as "Hallelujah." Even though this awe-inspired expression of YHWH's praise has become a common expression in most languages, it is not commonly found in the Old Testament. It is a term that is unique to the Book of Psalms in the Old Testament, and even here it is only used in the final third of the

Psalter.³⁵⁴ Hereafter, it can only be seen again in the book of Revelations in the New Testament. The positioning of this term in the *Psalter* suggests that it is mostly an editorial addition to the text.³⁵⁵ Wilson (1984:344) thinks that the role of the “hallelujah”-psalms is to mark editorial divisions in the final books of the *Psalter*. Goulder (1998:14) supports this notion and postulates that the interjection “hallelujah” is mainly used to validate subdivisions and provide structure to the mostly untitled content of Book V. Zenger (1998:77-78) adds that the use of “hallelujah” at the end of the fourth book of the *Psalter* was the result of redactional altering to link the fourth and the fifth books together (Zenger, 1998:77-78). However functional the “hallelujahs” in Books IV and V may be, it should be noted that they also serve an elucidatory purpose. The use of “hallelujah” at the end of the *Psalter* points to a thoughtful progression in the overall theological message of the book. The story of Israel’s redemption, as told throughout the *Psalter*, is one that progresses from the conflict in Books I and II to destruction in Book III to growth in Book IV and finally to “consummation” in Book V (Robertson, 2015:267-268). Thus, “hallelujah” is a term that is reserved for the celebration of the consummation of the servant Israel’s relationship with YHWH the universal and exclusive king.

The use of the unique phrase הַלְלוּ־יְהוָה (hallelujah) should be read in conjunction with two other lexemes that occurs with high frequency throughout Book V: הַלַּל (to

³⁵⁴ Cf. Pss. 104:35; 105:45; 106:48; 111:1; 112:1; 113:1, 9; 115:18; 116:19; 117:2; 135:1, 3, 21; 146:1, 10; 147:1, 20; 148:1, 14; 149:1, 9; 150:1, 6.

³⁵⁵ Willgren (2016:279-280) explains the probability of primary and secondary use of the term “hallelujah” in Pss. 104-117. The first occurrence of “hallelujah” is found in Ps. 104:35. Pss. 103 and 104 is linked together by the verbatim use of the phrase בְּרַכֵּי יְהוָה נַפְשֵׁי אֶתְיָהוָה (bless the Lord, O my soul) in Ps. 103:1, 2, 22 and Ps. 104:1, 35. This phrase link these psalms together. However, the “hallelujah” only occurs in Psalm 104, while Ps. 103 does not have this exhortation. Conclusively, the “hallelujah” must be a secondary addition to the text of Ps. 104. Furthermore, it is argued that the placement of “hallelujah” at the beginning of an acrostic psalm, is most likely secondary. Thus the “hallelujahs” in Pss. 111 and 112, must be a redactional addition. The “hallelujah” at the beginning of Ps. 113 could be original, while the one at the end of the psalm probably belonged to the beginning of Ps. 114 and was moved during the process of editing to form an *inclusio* around the content matter of P. 113. The use of “hallelujah” in Ps. 115 is supported by the use of the shortened name of YHWH in vv. 17-18, thus rendering it an original part of the text. While the “hallelujah” does not resonate with the content matter of Ps. 116 it certainly resonates with the pervading praise of Ps. 117.

praise)³⁵⁶ and יָדָה (give thanks/praise).³⁵⁷ These two terms are not only descriptive of the emotional undertone of Book V, it is also indicative of the overall theme of Book V, namely to praise and give thanks to YHWH.

This begs the question: What is the reason for this outpouring of praise and thanksgiving in Book V of the *Psalter*? Any attempt to answer this question must take into account two factors: The condition of the post-exilic Judeans and YHWH's provision.

First, the circumstances of the post-exilic community must be noted. Although liberated from Babylon and allowed to return to their homeland which was now in ruins, the post-exilic community remained vassals to the Persian Empire. Along with the huge task of restoring their country and economy, they also bore the huge burden of additional taxation by the Persian Empire. There was widespread poverty among the middle-class which was worsened by social injustices committed by the wealthy elite (Perdue & Carter, 2015:119).³⁵⁸ In Book V terms such as שָׁפָל (lowly),³⁵⁹ דָּל (helpless),³⁶⁰ אֶבְיוֹן (needy)³⁶¹ and עָנִי (poor)³⁶² are descriptive of the post-exilic community. With the use of these terms, the psalmist portrays the individual and community of post-exilic Israel as in need and completely dependent on YHWH's assistance and provision (Tucker, 2014:74). In Book V the dire situation of the poor is outlined as oppression at the hands of evil oppressors. The preferred title in Book V

³⁵⁶ Cf. Pss. 107:32; 109:30; 113:1(x2), 3; 115:17; 117:1; 119:164, 175; 135:1(x3); 145:2, 3; 146:1, 2; 147:12; 148:1(x2), 2(x2), 3(x2), 4, 5, 7, 13; 149:3; 150:1(x2); 2(x2), 3(x2), 4(x2), 5(x2), 6. (These mentions excludes the combined use of the verb הָלַל (praise) to form the exhortation הַלְלוּ יְיָ (hallelujah).

³⁵⁷ Cf. Pss. 107:1, 8, 15, 21, 31; 108:4; 109:30; 111:1; 118:1, 19, 21, 28, 29; 119:7, 62; 122:4; 136:1, 2, 3, 26; 138:1, 2, 4; 139:14, 140:14; 142:8; 145:10.

³⁵⁸ Perdue *et al* (2015:119) explains that the wealthy elite of Judea neglected their responsibility toward the small landowners, farmers and day labourers. As a result, the poor had to sell their farms. Some cases even necessitated the selling of children into slavery in order to survive financially.

³⁵⁹ Cf. Pss. 136:23; 138:6; 147:6.

³⁶⁰ Cf. Ps. 113:7.

³⁶¹ Cf. Pss. 107:41; 109:16, 22, 31; 112:9; 113:7; 132:15; 140:13.

³⁶² Cf. Pss. 107:10, 41; 109:16, 22; 119:50, 92, 153; 140:13.

to describe these evil oppressors is the רָשָׁע (wicked).³⁶³ Afflictions imposed on the post-exilic Israel included being verbally abused and persecuted (Ps. 109:2), being robbed (Ps. 119:61) and being hunted (Ps. 119:110) by the wicked. These evil oppressors are also described as those who have forsaken the law of YHWH (Ps. 119:53). The psalmist is bound by these afflictions (Ps. 107:10) and pleads with YHWH to take note of the offences of evil oppressors and come to the psalmist's rescue by letting the wicked perish (Ps. 112:10) through slaying them (Ps. 139:19) not granting them their desires (Ps. 140:9). Throughout the Psalms, particularly in Book V, YHWH is revealed as the bastion and emancipator of the poor (Groenewald, 2007:425). As a result, we see YHWH acting on behalf of the poor and needy throughout Book V. In the introductory psalm to Book V the psalmist asserts that YHWH lifts the needy out of their afflictions (v. 41) and in Psalm 109:31 YHWH is depicted as standing at the right hand of the needy, ready to be of assistance. YHWH's assistance extends across the boundaries of the physical to the judicial. Psalm 132:15 testify to YHWH's provision of food for those who hungry, while Psalm 140:13 proclaim that YHWH secure justice for those who are persecuted.

Second, it must be noted how YHWH responded to the circumstances of the post-exilic community. The explanatory particle כִּי (because) in Psalm 107:1 provides a clue as to the reasoning behind the call to יְדָה (give thanks/praise). The opening call of Psalm 107 provides the background against which to read and understand Book V – the setting of deliverance from captivity and the “joy of reunion” (Kidner, 2008:418). In the introductory verse to Book V, an invitation to give thanks to YHWH is supported with two explanatory particles and thus two explanations as to why YHWH is worthy of this praise. The first כִּי provides the foundational motive for praise, stating that YHWH is טוֹב (good). Born out of this fundamental goodness of YHWH is the second כִּי, i.e. כִּי לְעוֹלָם חַסְדּוֹ (because His faithfulness is forever). The keyword enlightening us to the reason for the insistence on thanksgiving in Book V is חַסְדּוֹ

³⁶³ Cf. Pss. 109:2, 7; 112:10(x2); 119:53, 61, 95, 110, 119, 155; 125:3; 129:4; 139:19; 140:5, 9; 141:4, 10; 145:20; 146:9; 147:6.

(goodness/faithfulness).³⁶⁴ Snyman (2011:28) maintains that wherever *hesed* is expressed, it is done from the basis of a well-established relationship, but whenever *hesed* is used in reference to YHWH's relationship with YHWH's people, it is to be understood as a concept that expresses a covenant relationship. It should be noted that out of the sixty occurrences of the term *hesed* in Book V, thirty-one times it is preceded by the phrase לְעוֹלָם (forever). This enlightens a completely new dimension of YHWH's faithfulness – it is not bound by Israel's transgressions and indiscretions just as much as it cannot be bound by the power of the enemies that besieged, captured and enslaved Israel. The *hesed* of YHWH cannot be confined by the boundaries of time as it is a bottomless pit. This *hesed* that is characteristic of YHWH's boundless covenantal loyalty is born out of YHWH's revelation to Moses at Mount Sinai in Exodus 34:6. Here, the *hesed* of YHWH is coupled with another term, namely אֱמֶת (*emet*, truth), which is another word that appears with some frequency throughout Book V about YHWH.³⁶⁵ Sheriffs (2003:283) states that the *emet* of YHWH, although commonly translated with "truth" more accurately refers to YHWH's reliability and/or loyalty. Throughout the Old Testament this hendiadys, namely the pairing of the terms *hesed* and *emet* in reference to YHWH, is not uncommon.³⁶⁶ This word pair is also found in Book V of the *Psalter*.³⁶⁷ Here it is indicative of the theology of Book V as it serves to emphasise that YHWH has remained loyal to Israel in their time of need and by YHWH's faithfulness and truth they were not only liberated from exile but sustained throughout the turbulent post-exile. YHWH deserves all the praise and thanksgiving that Israel has to offer. For this reason the phrase כִּי לְעוֹלָם חֲסֵדוֹ (for his faithfulness is forever) becomes a refrain that is echoed thirty-one times throughout Book V.

In Book V of the *Psalter*, there is a notable change in the way the lexeme מֶלֶךְ is applied. First, it is important to recognise that the kingship of YHWH has been acknowledged throughout the *Psalter* and that Book V is certainly not the first book of the *Psalter* to refer to YHWH as מֶלֶךְ (king). In Books I and II the title of *melek* is used

³⁶⁴ Cf. Pss. 107:1, 8, 21, 31, 43; 108:5; 109:12, 16, 21, 26; 115:1; 117:2; 118:1, 2, 3, 4, 29; 119:41, 64, 76, 88, 124, 149, 159; 130:7; 136:1-26; 138:2, 8; 141:5; 143:8, 12; 144:2; 145:8; 147:11.

³⁶⁵ Cf. Pss. 108:5; 111:7, 8; 115:1; 117:2, 119:43, 142, 151, 160; 132:11, 138:2; 145:18; 146:6.

³⁶⁶ Cf. Gn. 24:27, 49; 32:11; 47:29; Ex. 34:6; Jos. 2:14; 2 Sm. 2:6; 15:20.

³⁶⁷ Cf. Pss. 108:5; 115:1; 117:2; 138:2.

about both divine and earthly kingship. Both YHWH and David share the title. The closing verse of Psalm 72 sees the cessation of the prayers of David son of Jesse. Hereafter, no earthly king of Israel is again referred to by the honorary title of *melek* in the *Psalter*, although there is a continued reference to YHWH's kingship and reign throughout Books III to V. What then makes the use of the title *melek* in Book V about YHWH unique? The fact that David is almost completely absent in Books III and IV, but then makes a comeback in Book V! Although, this time around, David (or the davidic king) is never again acknowledged as king employing the title *melek*. One of the titles now awarded to David is עֶבֶד (servant)³⁶⁸ – a title that is also used of the rest of the post-exilic Israel.³⁶⁹ In Book V we thus see David blend into a sea of faces. On the other hand, David is also called מְשִׁיחַ (anointed one)³⁷⁰ which continues to underline the significant role that David or rather the davidic descendant has to play in the leadership of the nation. Combining these titles, calling the davidic king both “servant” and “anointed one” highlights the redefinition not only of David's kingship but also of YHWH's kingship. In the first davidic corpus of Book V, David petitions for the warrior YHWH to be of aid against enemies (Ps. 108:12-13), and in the final davidic corpus David is the voice acclaiming YHWH's victory by describing YHWH's reign and מְלִכּוּת (kingdom) as one of כְּבוֹד (glory) that shines of הִדְרָר (splendour) and that will remain עוֹלָם (forever). David advances from calling on “the Lord militant” to declaring “the Lord triumphant” (Gray. 1961:2). The impact of the recognition of YHWH as King (Ps. 145:1) lies in the fact that it is placed in the mouth of the servant David (Ps. 144:10). It is not David the king who acknowledges YHWH as his co-counsel, but rather David the servant who submits to the exclusivity of YHWH's counsel. The significance of David acknowledging YHWH as King while assuming the role of servant is that it underlines the exclusivity of YHWH's kingship.

This notion is further strengthened by referring to the מְלָכִים (kings) of other nations.³⁷¹ Every time mention is made in Book V of a ruler of an opposing nation it is done in a

³⁶⁸ Cf. Pss. 109:28; 132:10; 143:2, 12; 144:10.

³⁶⁹ Cf. Pss. 113:1; 134:1; 135:1, 9, 14; 136:22.

³⁷⁰ Cf. Ps. 132:10, 17.

³⁷¹ Cf. Pss. 110:5; 119:46; 135:10, 11(x2); 136:17; 136:18, 19, 20; 138:4; 144:10; 148:11; 149:8.

way that asserts YHWH's superior reign. Psalm 110:5 positions that YHWH will מְזַחֵץ (smite) kings in the day of YHWH's wrath. Psalms 135:10-11 and 136:19-20 recalls how YHWH נִכְבָּה (destroyed) the mighty kings Sihon (king of the Amorites) and Og (king of Bashan) and all the other kingdoms of Canaan. Psalm 138:4 projects that all the kings of the earth shall join in the praises of YHWH when they hear the psalmist's confession of YHWH's mighty deeds. Psalm 144:10 posits that YHWH is the One who can grant תְּשׁוּעָה (deliverance) to kings, thus YHWH also has the power to withhold it. In Psalm 148:11 all kings of the earth are once again called to praise the name of YHWH. A final mention is made in Book V about the kings of other nations, and here it is that they will be bound in chains by the saints of YHWH on YHWH's judgement (Ps. 149:8). The assertion of YHWH's might and reign over that of foreign kings in Book V is a response to Psalm 2:2 where it is mentioned that יַתִּיצְבוּ מַלְכֵי-אֲרָץ (the kings of the earth stand against) YHWH. In Book V it is shown that it is the kingship of YHWH that prevailed.

Book V illustrates the superiority of YHWH's kingship first of all by placing the recognition of YHWH's sole kingship in the mouth of David, the mightiest and most successful monarch Israel ever had. By assuming a lesser role as servant, David becomes the mouthpiece of the exclusive kingship of YHWH. The exclusivity of YHWH's kingship and rule is emphasised even further through recollection and by declaring YHWH's victory over the kings of the nations who once opposed YHWH.

The eminence of YHWH's exclusive kingship is linguistically underlined by the use of two prominent lexemes: יְרוּשָׁלַם (Jerusalem) and צִיּוֹן (Zion). To understand these terms requires a basic understanding of the Zion theology that was found during the Davidic-Solomonic empire (Roberts, 2002:324). In Deuteronomy 5:12 YHWH insists that YHWH will choose a dwelling among the tribes once they come to and settled in Canaan. Through the divinely appointed king David, YHWH conquered the Jebusite

city of Jerusalem³⁷² and captured the Canaanite fortress named Zion.³⁷³ David took up residence here and called it the “City of David.” Consequently, the Ark of the Covenant was brought with David, resulting in YHWH also taking residency in Jerusalem. As a consequence, Zion became a metonym for Jerusalem. Throughout the psalms the name ‘Zion’ is used in tandem to the name ‘Jerusalem.’³⁷⁴ Jerusalem or the City of David becomes the topographical location of where Zion is located. The name Zion, however, is much more than a place on a map, it is a name that evokes theological background and imagination.³⁷⁵ Roberts (2002:331-332) schematically outlines the theology that colours the name Zion throughout the Old Testament as follows:

- I. *Yahweh is the great King.*
- II. *Yahweh chose Jerusalem for his dwelling place.*
 - A. *Yahweh’s choice has implications for Zion’s topography.*
 1. *It is on a high mountain.*
 2. *It is watered by the water of paradise.*
 - B. *Yahweh’s choice has implications for Zion’s security.*
 1. *Yahweh protects it from his enemies.*
 - a. *The unruly powers of chaos, and*
 - b. *The enemy kings.*
 2. *At Yahweh’s rebuke:*
 - a. *The enemy is undone,*
 - b. *War is brought to an end,*
 - c. *And plunder is taken.*
 3. *The nations acknowledge Yahweh’s suzerainty.*
 - C. *Yahweh’s choice has implications for Zion’s inhabitants.*
 1. *They share in the blessing of God’s presence.*

³⁷² Wessels (2006:730) notes Zion was located between the Kidron and the Tyropoean valleys and was a highly fortified section of the Jebusite city of Jerusalem.

³⁷³ Cf. 2 Sm. 5:6-12. According to the Bible text Zion was built on a mountain range and was the last remaining Canaanite bastion in the Promised Land (Grove, 2005:1020).

³⁷⁴ Jerusalem was more often used in reference to the political aspect of the city, while Zion was used to highlight its religious counterpart (Klouta, 2008:937).

³⁷⁵ According to Newell (2015:1702) the name ‘Zion’ is applied differently by various Bible writers. It is used to refer to the Solomonic temple as the dwelling place of YHWH (Pss. 48:2; 84:4; 132:13). In the Book of Isaiah ‘Zion’ refers to the entire nation (Is. 1:27). The term is also used in reference to Jerusalem as the capital city of Judah (Am. 6:1).

2. *But they must be fit to live in his presence.*

The covenant that YHWH made with David contained the promise of a house for David in Jerusalem. As a consequence, YHWH's appointment of David as the king who is residing in Jerusalem is fundamentally bound up with YHWH's selection of Zion as an earthly dwelling (Grove, 2005:1020). The covenant that YHWH made with David further included the promise that David's descendants will always be enthroned in Jerusalem. Even after the dividing of the kingdom of Israel, this remained true and David's descendants tended the throne in Jerusalem, the capital of the Southern kingdom. It was only with the advent of king Solomon that a temple was constructed for YHWH³⁷⁶ and YHWH could finally exchange a tent-dwelling for a permanent residence in Jerusalem/Zion.³⁷⁷ This temple was built on a hill which ultimately became known as 'Mount Zion' (Groenewald, 2008:358). Zion became the place where both the davidic king and YHWH was enthroned. As a consequence, Zion became the place where heaven and earth met, the point in creation where divine kingship intersected with earthly kingship (Wessels, 2006:731-732). Bigger (1989:66) suggests that three things in Jerusalem/Zion were the symbols of YHWH's presence and blessing: the palace, the davidic king and the temple. As long as these three things remained in place, it served as confirmation that YHWH dwelled among them, keeping them safe.

Due to the covenant disobedience of the Judeans, the palace of David and the temple was destroyed at the hands of the Babylonians. Along with that, any and all ideology about the divine sustained davidic kingship was laid in ruins. The seemingly invincible Jerusalem/Zion was obliterated. After the destruction of Jerusalem/Zion Psalms, 93-100 send a reassuring message to the exilic community that they will be once again reunited with YHWH in Zion (Klouda, 2008:937). In post-exilic Israel, Zion becomes a unifying theme for the faith community as it is the place of reunion with YHWH and the location of the ideal kingdom with YHWH at its helm. In Book V the name יְרוּשָׁלַם (Jerusalem) occurs a total of twelve times³⁷⁸ as opposed to the only five-time mention of Jerusalem in Books I-IV. References to Jerusalem is made in Book V as a reminder

³⁷⁶ Cf. 1 Ki. 8:13.

³⁷⁷ Cf. 1 Ki. 8:11; 2 Chr. 5:14; 7:1-2.

³⁷⁸ Cf. Pss. 116:19; 122:2, 3, 6; 125:2; 128:5; 135:21; 137:5, 6, 7; 147:2, 12.

of history (Ps. 137:7), to emphasise the dramatic return of the exiled people (Pss. 122:2-3; 147:2), to call on all to join the praise of YHWH (Pss. 116:19; 135:21; 147:12), to pray for the peace and restoration of the city and its inhabitants (Pss. 122:6; 137:5-6) and to underline YHWH's protection and blessing that flows from Jerusalem (Pss. 125:2; 128:5). The name צִיּוֹן (Zion) occurs a total of fourteen times throughout Book V.³⁷⁹ In Book V the name Zion tells the story of the triumph of YHWH (Pss. 126:1; 129:5) as it is highlighted as the centre of YHWH's dwelling on earth and the setting from where YHWH's blessing proceeds (Pss. 128:5; 132:13; 133:3; 134:3). The most prominent function of the name Zion in Book V is that it serves to emphasise YHWH's universal and exclusive kingship and Israel's acquiescence to this divine rule. Of the fourteen times the name Zion is mentioned, seven of them are located in the Psalms of Ascent. The Psalms of Ascent presents Zion as the centre of YHWH's provision, contradicting Israel's fears of abandonment. Given the national disaster, i.e. the exile and destruction of Jerusalem, the psalmist visualises and presents Zion as a place of worship and blessing. Amid distress, the psalmist creates hope in a future of the fulfilment of YHWH's promises by reminding a disheartened nation of YHWH's original commitment to them (Klouda, 2008:939). In Psalm 146:10 the excitement of the psalmist is tangible as the psalmist exclaims: יְהוָה לְעוֹלָם אֱלֹהֵינוּ צִיּוֹן לְדָר וָדָר יִמְלֹךְ (YHWH will reign forever, your God O Zion, for all generations). Here the psalmist sings of YHWH's sovereign rule which will emerge from Zion. Finally, in Psalm 149:2 the psalmist gives a directive to the inhabitants of Zion to יִגִּילוּ בַּמְלֶכֶם בְּנֵי צִיּוֹן (let the sons of Zion rejoice in their King).

Throughout Book, V Jerusalem enjoys renewed attention as the locality of YHWH's so-called earthly residence. In Book V Zion becomes the symbol of YHWH's presence and commitment to Israel, but simultaneously it once again becomes the symbol of Israel's commitment to YHWH. Book V does not only reinforce the religious significance of Zion as the place from which YHWH's protection and blessings proceed, but it also becomes the centre for YHWH's worship as the psalmist calls on Jerusalem and Zion to join in YHWH's praises.

³⁷⁹ Cf. Pss. 110:2; 125:1; 126:1; 128:5; 129:5; 132:13; 133:3; 134:3; 135:21, 137:1, 3; 146:10; 147:12; 149:2.

Another distinguishing linguistic feature of Book V that differentiates it from the rest of the *Psalter* is not a recurring linguistic element, but rather a lack thereof. That there are four doxologies of striking resemblance concluding each of the first four books of the *Psalter*,³⁸⁰ has long been recognised by scholars. Each of the first four books of the *Psalter* ends with a doxological formula³⁸¹ that consists of three basic elements (Kratz, 1996:13): a benediction (“blessed be YHWH”), an eternity formula (“forever”) and a double amen (Ps. 106:48 is the only doxology that ends with a single ‘amen’).³⁸² Strengthening the argument of a doxological conclusion to each of the first four books is Zenger (1998:78) that points to the fact that the four doxologies form a chiasmic structure and is thus intrinsically interwoven with each other. Book V, however, lacks this concluding formula. How should we understand the lack of a doxology at the end of Book V?

In attempting to answer the above-mentioned question, two suggestions must be considered. First that Psalms 146-150 is an integral part of Book V and serves as the doxology to the collection, and second that Psalms 146-150 is non-integral to the content of Book V and that Psalm 145:21 is the final verse and doxology to Book V.

Goulder (1998:285) positions that Psalms 146-150 is both the conclusion to Book V and of the entire *Psalter*. He argues that there are distinct verbal and thematic links between Psalm 146 and its predecessor Psalm 145 that illustrates Psalm 146 as a continuation of the rest of Book V.³⁸³ It is further argued that Psalms 146-150 fit into the neatly organised sequence of Book V – just like Psalms 108-110 (the first davidic collection in the book) is followed by a series of hallelujah-psalms (Pss. 111-118) so the final davidic collection (Pss. 138-145) is followed by a collection of hallelujah-psalms (Pss. 146-150). It should be noted that doxologies are not the only indication of editorial activity in the *Psalter* and thus not the only indicator of cohesion in books and collections. In Book V an alternative organisational technique is used to indicate the beginning and end of the collection. Where the first three books of the *Psalter* are

³⁸⁰ According to Wilson (1985:16-18) it is characteristic of hymnic collections in the Ancient Near East to be concluded with some form of doxology.

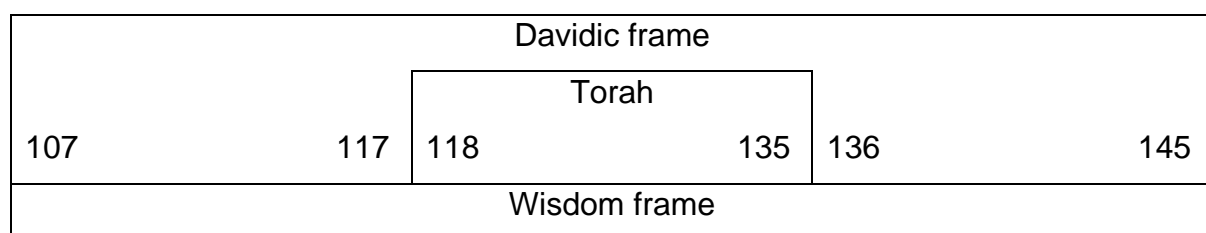
³⁸¹ Cf. Pss. 41:14 (I); 72:18-19 (II); 89:53 (III); 106:48 (IV).

³⁸² See Sanders (2010:677-688) for an exposition on the doxologies of the *Psalter*.

³⁸³ Both psalms give praise to YHWH for deliverance of the downtrodden and the defeat over the wicked (Goulder, 1998:258).

primarily organised through author and genre designations, Books IV and V use an introductory phrase that is responded to in the closing psalm or psalms of the book (Wilson, 1992:131). In the case of Book V, it is opened with the call of the psalmist in Psalm 107:1 to “*Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good; his love endures forever.*” Book V then concludes in Psalms 146-150 with a series of הַלְלוּ־יְהוָה (hallelujah) which obeys the command in the opening psalm of the collection of giving thanks by praising YHWH.³⁸⁴

A second suggestion is that Psalms 146-150 is non-integral to the content of Book V and that Psalm 145:21 is the final verse and doxology to Book V. This notion is underscored by Wilson (1993:79) when he indicates that Book V is opened with a thanksgiving psalm (Ps. 107) that contains a wisdom note in its final verses, asserting that: “*The upright see and rejoice, but all the wicked shut their mouths. Whoever is wise let him heed these things and consider the great love of the Lord*” (vv. 42-43). This wisdom declaration is met in Psalm 145:19-20 with a follow-up wisdom warning when the psalmist cautions that: “*He fulfils the desires of those who fear him; he hears their cry and saves them. The Lord watches over all who love him, but all the wicked he will destroy.*” Based on the placement of these wisdom motifs, Wilson (1993:79) proposes that a wisdom frame encapsulates Book V. He diagrams his proposal as follows:



If it is the case that Psalm 145:21 concludes Book V of the *Psalter* and takes the position of a doxological formula for Book V, how are we to understand Psalms 146-150? Of the three basic elements present in all the other doxologies, two can be found in Psalm 145:21: The benediction - וַיְבָרֵךְ כָּל־בֶּשֶׂר שֵׁם קְדֹשׁוֹ (and all flesh will bless his holy name) and the eternity formula - לְעוֹלָם וָעֶד (forever and ever). The only

³⁸⁴ To this Day (1990:109) adds that Psalm 150 is a doxology on the theme of praising YHWH.

element missing in this doxology is the ‘amen.’ An argument can be made that the exclusion of the ‘amen’ at the end of Book V is an indication of the continuation of the narrative of the *Psalter* in the individual as well as collective lives of Israel who are called to YHWH’s praises throughout the *Psalter*. Psalms 146-150 then exemplifies this praise by asserting a series of “hallelujahs.” Following the challenge of Psalm 145:19-21 the final Hallel (Pss. 146-150) continues in the praise of YHWH. This praise is portrayed as progressing from the individual (Ps. 146) to the community (Pss. 147 and 149) and finally to the whole of creation (Pss. 148 and 150), (Kratz, 1996:26). Cha (2006:207) asserts that when Psalm 145:21 is viewed as the missing doxology of Book V and Psalms 146-150 is viewed as the doxology to the entire Hebrew *Psalter* a relation can be drawn between each of the five doxologies of the *Psalter* (i.e. Pss. 41:14; 72:18-19; 89:53; 106:48; 145:21) and each of the individual psalms of the final Hallel. This would render Psalms 146-150 a grand doxology attesting to the universal kingship of YHWH. The final Hallel concludes with Psalm 150 that “unites all the voices of the *Psalter* by means of a series of summons to praise El the Israelite God of the cosmos and history” (Human, 2011:9). As Psalm 145:21 can be read as an open-ended invitation directed at כָּל־בְּשָׂר׃ (all flesh) to bless the name of YHWH, so Psalm 150 continues this bid by imperatively making the same call.

It remains uncertain if Psalms 146-150 is the conclusion to Book V or the conclusion to the entire *Psalter* or both. What remains certain is the unrestricted ending of Book V (in either Psalm 145:21 or Psalm 150) that invites the prolongation of the narrative of the *Psalter* utilising the lives of Israel. They are now called to live the praise they have read and sung about in the *Psalter*.

The unique linguistic profile of Book V offers some direction on the key themes and the prevailing discourse of the greater collection of Psalms 107-150. The above exposition exposes a well-defined articulation of praise for YHWH. Dominant lexemes present YHWH not only as the universal king but also underlines the exclusivity of YHWH’s kingship. Recurring vocabulary also alerts the reader to Jerusalem/Zion as the seat of YHWH’s royal rule from which blessing proceeds to the rest of creation. Finally, the open-ended doxology of Book V serves as an invitation to the continuation of the praise of YHWH as it is represented by Book V.

6.4 Theological profile of Book V

Book V of the *Psalter* presents the reader with a multi-layered theological discourse. The compilation and convergence of a diverse set of texts deliver a Mosaic of the rule of YHWH in a human community within the meta-narrative of a post-exilic Israel. The structural markers discussed in the preceding sections translates into the theological programme of Book V of the *Psalter*.

Throughout the *Psalter*, YHWH's kingship and rule are intrinsically interwoven with David and the davidic lineage since David and his descendants were assigned the duty of representing YHWH's rule on earth. The contiguousness of human and divine rule lies at the heart of the Hebrew *Psalter* in its final form (Miller, 2004:187). The earthly monarch's rule alongside his divine counterpart is established as early in the *Psalter* as Psalm 2. From the mouth of YHWH comes the affirmation: "*I have instilled my King on Zion, my holy hill.*" Throughout the *Psalter*, a royal theology is presented as the davidic lineage is the reinforcer of YHWH's rule, a proverbial extension of YHWH's arm. As the identifiable character of the *Psalter* to which readers can relate David takes on much more than the role of a figure of hope, he embodies the archetype of faith. Throughout Books I and II David assumes the *persona* of the righteous king and becomes the vessel through which YHWH's covenant is realised for all Israel. Book III sees the once flourishing kingdom's collapse with a closing appeal to YHWH to remain faithful to the house of David and consequently the davidic covenant. However, in Books IV and V a shift in the royal regime of Israel is noticeable. Both Books IV and V emphasise the kingdom of YHWH. Books IV and V address the despondency experienced by Israel owing to the Babylonian exile by redirecting the nation's focus to the reign of YHWH over all oppressive forces (Gillingham, 2008:210). Book IV repeatedly make use of the phrase יהוה מלך (YHWH reigns) creating a theocratic basis to the second part of the *Psalter*. Book IV initiates the recognition of YHWH as the supreme and divine ruler of the post-exilic Israel. Leuenberger (2004:85-92) asserts that Book V was then respectively created to add to the theocratic view of Book IV in a matter of three phases. The first phase (Pss. 107-118) underline the deliverance of the nation. The second phase (Pss. 119-136) emphasise YHWH's delivering power through the themes of creation and history. The final phase (Pss.

137-150) presents a theocratic theology based on the themes of YHWH's deliverance and power, which is rooted in the nation's acknowledgement thereof.

However, observing the davidic frame within which the content of Book V is placed (Wilson, 1993:97) it should be noted that there is a continuation of the royal theology that is presented by Books I and II. Consequently, the extension of the theocratic theology of Book IV persists throughout Book V within the framework of a re-imagination of davidic kingship and covenant. This overarching davidic theme enjoys prominence and nuances the theocratic theology of Book V by assisting the reader in navigating the editorial purpose and narrative of its content. By placing Psalms 108-110, a davidic collection, at the opening of Book V and Psalms 138-145, another davidic collection, at its end the reimagining of the role of David is the theological framework within which the rest of the content of Book V gains meaning. It should further be noted that Book V is coloured with the theology of praise. It starts and ends with a call to praise YHWH. Praise is the direct result of acknowledgement and acceptance of YHWH's exclusive kingship.

In both the first and final davidic corpus in Book V, praise for YHWH is placed in the mouth of David. In the first davidic collection of Book V David admits to the fallibility of the davidic kingship when he admits to the fact that YHWH no longer goes out with the armies (Ps. 108:12-13). In Psalm 109 David becomes the voice appealing to YHWH's remembrance of the davidic covenant by petitioning to YHWH's *hesed* (vv. 21 and 26). Then, in Psalm 110 David is invited to take a seat at YHWH's right hand (v. 1). This portrayal of David should, however, not be regarded as similar to the shared kingship of Books I and II. Instead, a re-imagined version of David is presented – a עֶבֶד (servant) David, a מְשִׁיחַ (anointed) David and a לְעוֹלָם עַל־דְּבַרְתִּי מֶלְכִי־צֶדֶק (priest forever in the order of Melchizedek) David. Where once David was portrayed as the forceful trail-blazer of Israel, he now assumes the role of subordinate. His appointment is no longer one of power but of servitude and his duty is to praise and make known the mighty deeds of YHWH the King. David becomes the mouthpiece of the universal kingdom of YHWH that calls on Israel, the nations and the rest of creation to recognise and praise YHWH as King, initiating a process of submitting to YHWH's universal rule.

Following the re-imagination of David's newfound position in a post-exilic Israel, is a well-structured case presented in support of the theocratic theological framework of Book V. Three core elements of Israelite faith that is of significant importance to the post-exilic Judean is emphasised to encourage a struggling post-exilic community by underlining YHWH's divine supremacy and kingship. The three elements are: History, Torah and Zion.

The twin psalms (Pss. 111 and 112) serve as an introduction to the *Pesah*-Hallel (Pss. 113-118) eulogising YHWH's redemption as divine king and commending the person that fears and honours YHWH's kingship as it is established throughout history. The *Pesah*-Hallel follows as a reflection on Israel's exodus from Egypt and their subsequent nomadic existence in the desert. It defines YHWH's standing as exalted above all nations and enthroned on high but simultaneously involved in creation and redemption. History, as it is recalled throughout Psalms 113-118, testifies to YHWH's aid to the Israelites, reaching down to rescue them from slavery in Egypt, and by manipulating natural forces that are beyond the control of any earthly king, to abet the Israelite escape. The *Pesah*-Hallel also defines YHWH's kingship using the Israelites' relationship with YHWH through prompting the memory of their passage from slavery under Pharaoh (the king of Egypt) to servitude to YHWH (the divine king). YHWH's triumph over the mighty Egypt, Pharaoh and their gods is an assertion of YHWH's sovereign kingship. Although seated in heaven YHWH bows down to aid afflicted Israel (Ps. 113) and even reaches down to Sheol to bring them back to the land of the living (Ps. 116). YHWH's presence extends over all the earth (Pss. 114 and 117) and is exalted above idols (Ps. 115). Finally, Israel arrives at Jerusalem, the chosen city of YHWH's reign (Ps. 118). The *hesed* of YHWH is cited as the motive for YHWH's redemption of Israel in history and a reminder of YHWH's loyalty. The *Pesah*-Hallel testifies to YHWH's supremacy throughout history and postulates YHWH's universal kingship by recalling YHWH's saving acts and provision in the past. Israel's history serves as evidence to the theocratic notion that YHWH is King over all creation.

This is followed by Psalm 119 – an individual but extensive composition on the Torah. The sheer magnitude of the one hundred and seventy-six verses of Psalm 119 draws our attention to the composition's prominence within the theocratic framework of Book

V. The end of the *Pesah*-Hallel is witness to liberated Israel walking through the שַׁעֲרֵי צְדָקָה (gates of righteousness) and entering Jerusalem, the seat of YHWH's reign and the nucleus of YHWH's presence. Psalm 119 reminds of the Sinai events where the Torah was given to Moses as a guideline for the nation's conduct if they were to live amidst YHWH's presence. Psalm 119 asserts the realisation that submission to the universal reign of YHWH is bound by adherence to the Torah. In a post-exilic community adherence to the Torah was how YHWH's kingship was both accepted and honoured.

The final liturgical unit, the *Šîr hama'ălōt* psalms, tells the story of how the once exiled community took pilgrimage from captivity to Zion. The fundamental theme of Psalms 120-134 is Jerusalem and the temple located on the fortified Zion hill. Zion is the chosen dwelling of YHWH among the tribes of Israel and a symbol of YHWH's presence and kingly rule. In a post-exilic community, Zion was the symbol of YHWH's kingship and rule while simultaneously being the symbol of Israel's renewed commitment to YHWH.

Finally, the rendition of YHWH's kingship circles back to history – both that of creation and Israel. Psalms 135 and 136 reminds of YHWH's sovereignty by celebrating YHWH as the universal king who provides and cares for all creation. It also provides an overview of Israel's history with a specific focus on the Exodus that testifies to the mighty deeds of YHWH. However, in Psalm 137 Israel is reminded of a more recent past, a second exodus that is not so far removed from memory, i.e. the Babylonian exile. Adding to YHWH's supremacy and kingship is a reminder to Israel to not forget that they have once again been saved by YHWH.

Each one of these collections systematically fit into the theocratic theological framework that is initiated in Book IV and brought to completion in Book V. When looking at Israel's history, their captivity in Egypt and how YHWH rescued them, how YHWH sustained them throughout their sojourn in the desert and how YHWH guided them to a safe arrival in the promised land, it serves as an affirmation for YHWH's divine supremacy. History thus serves as evidence to the theocratic notion that YHWH is King. When considering the Torah as a guideline, provided by YHWH at Sinai, to

indicate proper conduct if indeed the nation were to live amidst YHWH's presence, it serves as an affirmation of YHWH's divine supremacy. Acceptance of the Torah thus serves as evidence to the theocratic notion that YHWH is King. When reflecting on the history of Zion as the chosen seat of YHWH's rule and the nation's renewed commitment upon their return to Zion, it serves as an affirmation of YHWH's divine supremacy. Zion thus supports the theocratic notion that YHWH is King. History, the Torah and Zion, the three key elements to Book V of the *Psalter*, maintains the view of YHWH's universal kingship.

Since the theocratic basis of the theology of Book V has been established, we are met with the final appearance of David in the *Psalter*. Psalms 108-110 sees the beginning of a shift in the depiction of David. Although David is still depicted as an authoritative character, the emphasis shifts from his power to his subservience to YHWH when he is awarded the title of priest-king. Already the reader is presented with a revolutionised royal theology – one that does not see David the earthly monarch at its centre, but rather YHWH the divine king. In Psalms 138-145, however, the re-imagination of the davidic kingship and covenant reaches its climax. Psalms 140-143 underscores David's meekness when he appeals to YHWH for protection against evil oppressors. Where once the davidic king was YHWH's mode of action against oppressing forces, now the king looks to YHWH for protection (Ross, 2016:817). A realisation of the superiority of YHWH's reign, also placed in the mouth of David, is found in Psalms 139 and 144. The relegation of David takes place through the only self-assigned title in the final davidic *Psalter*, that of עֶבֶד (servant) of YHWH as David realises his dependence on the omniscient, omnipresent and omnipotent guardianship of the divine king. This realisation ultimately leads to an explication of trust in YHWH's kingship. Both Psalms 138 and 145 places the praises of YHWH as supreme Ruler and King in the mouth of David. YHWH is celebrated as God-king, while David assumes his duty as a priest-king, serving and facilitating YHWH's worship under the Judeans and all other nations. This worship is continued and brought to a climax in Psalms 146-150.

It should be noted that in the final davidic *Psalter* of Book V David is no longer the historic David, neither the fictional or ideal king David. David becomes synonymous with Israel. King David is now categorically reinterpreted to become every

man/woman. David now reflects the people of YHWH, the individual, the community, the nations as well as the whole of creation (Human, 2009:67). Consequently, the acknowledgement of the supremacy and the exclusivity of YHWH's kingship and rule is placed in the mouth of every individual and the whole of creation. Book V opens and closes with the foundation and the culmination of a royal theology that is shaped by a theocratic view of YHWH, resulting in a theocentric royal theology.

6.5 Recurring theme in Book V: exclusive kingship of YHWH

Aiding in shaping a post-exilic community's new identity and their comprehension of YHWH, our attention is directed to the overall theme that colours the collection of Psalms 107-150 and what it attempts to convey concerning the meta-narrative of the *Psalter*.

In Book V we find a poor and squandered community, that is described as **שָׁפָל** (lowly), **דָּל** (helpless), **אֶבְיוֹן** (needy) and **עָנִי** (poor), returned from Babylonian exile. A community that still finds themselves at the mercy of enemy nations and evil oppressors. Because of the constant presence of the **רָשָׁע** (wicked) Israel desperately seeks leadership in the form of guidance, provision and protection. Book V realises the failure of human leadership in the form of earthly kingship to ward off oppression by evil oppressors. This is evident in Psalm 107 that illustrates the rescue of the exiled people as the result of, not human, but divine intervention. Not any human king, but YHWH is the one who saved them from every affliction they suffered, from the **מִדְבָּר** (wilderness), the **חֹשֶׁךְ** (darkness), the **דַּלְתוֹת נְחֹשֶׁת וּבָרִיחַי בְּרֹזֶל** (gates of bronze and bars of iron), and the **סְעָרָה** (tempest) to bring them back to the land that was promised and gifted to them long before the exile. The praise for YHWH that is initiated in its opening verse: “Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good; his love endures forever” (Ps. 107:1) is continued throughout Book V and reaches a culmination in the final Hallel (Pss. 146-150. The numerous summons to **יְדָה** (give thanks) and to **הַלֵּל** (praise) YHWH, coupled with the occasional exhortations of **הַלְלוּ־יְהוָה** (hallelujah)

portrays the hymnic character of Book V and the unrelenting commendation to YHWH's realised kingship over Israel.

The individual who is brought to the foreground by the psalmist, to emphasise the universal kingship of YHWH, is none other than the greatest monarch in Israel's history, namely David. One can only assume the keen insight of the writers and redactors who put the recognition of the supremacy of divine kingship in the mouth of the greatest human king and leader the nation ever had. Book V is framed by David's so-called evaluation of YHWH's universal reign. There is also an intentional deviation from the expression of YHWH's kingship in the first davidic corpus of Book V and the final davidic corpus. In Psalm 110:1 we find the davidic king seated at YHWH's right hand and in verse 5 we find YHWH at the right hand of the davidic king. This imagery is often construed as proof of the favour that the davidic king enjoys in YHWH's sight. However, when read within the context of the psalm, what is conveyed is the assertion of YHWH's might over enemy oppositions. YHWH is the one who enforces authority and subject enemies to be the footstool of the davidic king (Ps. 110:1). YHWH is the warrior who stands at the davidic king's right hand, crushing the monarchs of opposing nations (Ps. 110:5). YHWH is the judge who will bring condemnation to the nations (Ps. 110:6). Flynn, (2014:35) states that this imagery, i.e. that of an authoritative figure, a warrior and a judge, is common expressions throughout the Hebrew Bible of YHWH's kingship. As a result, YHWH's kingship is already asserted in the opening psalms of Book V alongside the davidic king – a priest-king David.

After the opening psalms of Book V (Pss. 107-110), the psalmist continues with an ingenious and liturgically systemised demonstration of YHWH's kingship as it is revealed through three elements: History, Torah and Zion. The inner-frame of Book V (Pss. 111-134) is liturgically arranged in sequential order according to the Israelite annual festivals: The feast of Passover (Pss. 113-118), the feast of Pentecost (Ps. 119) and the feast of Tabernacles (Pss. 120-134). According to Human (2007:67), these three liturgical collections theologically commemorates "the salvation-historical stations" of the exodus for Egypt, the giving of the Torah at Sinai and finally the arrival in Jerusalem at Mount Zion, the earthly seat of the heavenly King. These salvation-historical stations become the psalmist's tool to exhibit the nationalistic as well as the universal kingship and reign of YHWH (Muis, 2008:277).

First, YHWH's kingship is revealed in YHWH's dealings with Israel throughout history. A process of memory is invoked by recounting, through song (Pss. 113-118), Israel's deliverance from captivity and slavery in Egypt, their time in the desert and finally their arrival at Jerusalem. Reflecting on YHWH's conquests and victories over foreign nations, their rulers and their deities assert YHWH's kingship as knowing no boundaries and thus being universal. YHWH is not only portrayed as the exalted King who is seated in heaven, but also a compassionate King that is intimately involved in the well-being of YHWH's subjects.

Second, the kingship of YHWH is commemorated through a recollection of the Sinai events where the Torah was provided as a guide to conduct under YHWH's rule. Throughout Psalm 119 the kingship of YHWH is supported by the parameters the Torah provides for all who submits to YHWH's rule. The Torah is much more than a set of rules governing proper conduct keeping order in check. It also becomes the vessel through which the blessings of YHWH, the divine king, can be obtained. Right from the start, the psalmist states: "*Blessed are they whose ways are blameless, who walk according to the law of the Lord.*" The Torah serves to portray YHWH as the faithful King who preserved the lives of the king's subjects using their obedience to YHWH's ordinances.

Finally, the kingship of YHWH is confirmed by the Zion collection. To return to Jerusalem and being able to rebuild the temple on Mount Zion was the highlight for the returned exiles, and most probably the affirmation they needed of YHWH's kingship as Zion was the symbol of YHWH's presence. Ollenburger (1987:46) states that the joy that is associated with Zion throughout the *Psalter* is unambiguously associated with the presence of Israel's 'great King' who provides security for Zion and the inhabitants of Jerusalem. Being the place of both YHWH's protection and blessing, returning to Jerusalem at Zion Israel was once again reminded of YHWH's faithfulness. Being able to return to Zion was a further affirmation of YHWH's power and rule over all other nations, kings and their deities (Snyman, 2006:683). As they ascended to the temple, singing the Songs of Ascent, every song further strengthened their acknowledgement of YHWH's supreme kingship. The acknowledgement of Zion as the location of YHWH's rule does not in any way limit YHWH's kingship to only Zion.

It simply provides a locale from which YHWH's universal kingship operates (Flynn, 2014:40).

In Psalms 108-110 David the subservient priest-king becomes the voice affirming YHWH's universal kingship. Then the psalmist proceeds by relating history, the Torah and Zion as affirmations of YHWH's supremacy and kingship. As Book V comes to a close the psalmist circles back to the character of David – the authoritative voice of the psalms. Bringing Book V to a conclusion is the admittance of David to the superiority of YHWH. In Book V David is no longer referred to as מֶלֶךְ (king). The only title by which David is called in the final davidic *Psalter* (Pss. 138-145) is עֶבֶד (servant), i.e. Psalms 143:2, 12 and 144:10. The threefold reference to David as “servant” highlights David's meekness and subservience. The impact of the statement in Psalm 145:1: “*I will exalt you, my God the King...*” is concealed in the detail that it is an admittance attributed precisely to the servant David. It is not David the king who acknowledges YHWH as his co-counsel, but rather David the servant who submits to the exclusivity of YHWH's kingship. Where at first David is the one positioned next to the warrior YHWH (Ps. 110:1, 5) who provides aid against and accomplishes victory over enemies (Pss. 108:12-13; 110:1), now David is the voice declaring YHWH triumphant by stating that YHWH's מְלֻכּוּת (kingdom) will remain forever (Ps. 145:13). There is a definite evolution of thought that can be seen from the first davidic unit in Book V, to the last and final davidic collection in the entire *Psalter*. The significance of David's acknowledgement of YHWH as King is not simply an admittance to the universality, but primarily to the exclusivity of YHWH's kingship. In support of the notion of YHWH's exclusive kingship is the thirteen references made in Book V to the מְלֻכֵי (kings) of other nations. The distinction made between David and the rulers of other nations is striking. David is never referred to by the title of king in Book V, however, the rulers of other nations are titled as such. Though every time mention is made in Book V of a king of an enemy nation, it is done in a way that declares YHWH's victory and superiority. In conclusion to the entire *Psalter*, all the kings of the earth are called to join in praising YHWH, thus they are called not only to acknowledge YHWH's superiority but also to admit to the exclusivity of YHWH's kingship and rule.

The predominant theme of Book V is the exclusive kingship of YHWH. This is communicated by the davidic frame that surrounds the content of Book V. David, the great ruler of Israel and the one whose lineage is the promised rule in Jerusalem, intentionally assumes a lesser role first as priest-king and then as a servant. Instead of promoting his authority and kingship, he becomes the mouthpiece to the exclusive kingship of YHWH. The exclusivity of YHWH's rule is further emphasised by the liturgical collection that forms the centre of Book V. YHWH's superior and exclusive rule is accentuated through remembrance of YHWH's mighty acts in history, through adherence to YHWH's Torah and by honouring Zion as the seat of YHWH's exclusive kingship.

6.6 Psalm 139 as a declaration of YHWH's exclusive kingship

Book V narrates YHWH's gracious deliverance of the Israelites from the Babylonian exile. The beneficence YHWH has revealed to the suppressed community of faith becomes the basis for the call to celebration in Psalm 107. Book V is witness to David's return to the *Psalter* as David becomes the individual tasked with the responsibility to lead the people in the realisation of YHWH's wondrous redemptive deeds. Furthermore, being the faith leader, David is the voice calling on the faith community to give thanks to and praise YHWH for YHWH's deliverance and sustained fortification. In the final psalm attributed to David in Book V and the entire *Psalter*, David "celebrates the sovereignty of God over the community of faith and all creation" (DeClaisé-Walford, 2020:liii). In the final psalm attributed to him, David does more than just celebrate YHWH's deliverance, David also declares YHWH's universal and sovereign kingship over Israel (v. 4), other nations (v. 9), and over the whole of creation (v. 10). David thus becomes the ambassador for YHWH's exclusive reign over all creation. Within the compositional context of Book V and the theme that dominates its discourse, we attempt to understand the divergent tones present in Psalm 139.

Psalm 139 forms part of the final davidic *Psalter*, and is thus part of the upward curve leading to the climax of David's declaration that YHWH is King (Ps. 145:1) and his commitment to making known the glory and majesty of YHWH's exclusive reign to all people (Ps. 145:12). Psalm 139 can thus be understood as a preview to the declaration

of YHWH's exclusive kingship, giving the reader a glimpse of what the exclusive kingship of YHWH entails.

One of the most striking features of Book V, distinguishing it from the rest of the *Psalter*, is the shouts of praise that can be heard from the first psalm (Ps. 107) straight through the collection. The calls to **יִדָּה** (give thanks/praise) and to **הַלֵּל** (praise) are descriptive of the emotional undertone of Psalms 107-150. The two-word phrase **הַלְלוּ-יְיָ** (hallelujah) is an awe-inspired expression reserved for the celebration of YHWH's universal and exclusive kingship. Psalm 139:1-18 can be broadly interpreted as praise for YHWH as its basic mood is that of admiration, reverence and glorification. The call to praise is further adhered to in Psalm 139:14 when the psalmist exclaims that **אֹדֶיךָ** (I will give thanks to you). The psalmist continues to provide two reasons for this praise of which the first is the psalmist's creation **כִּי נִוְרָאוֹת נִפְלְיֹתֵי** (because fearfully I am distinct), and the second is the marvellous nature of YHWH's works **מֵעֲשֵׂיךָ נִפְלְאִים** (wonderful are your works). This feature of Psalm 139 links it to the call to praise YHWH in Book V. As praise is the direct result of acknowledgement and acceptance of YHWH's exclusive kingship, Psalm 139 becomes an exaltation to the exclusivity of YHWH's reign.

The primary reason for the call to praise YHWH in Book V is the boundlessness of YHWH's **חֶסֶד** (goodness/faithfulness). The refrain **כִּי לְעוֹלָם חֶסֶדְךָ** (for his faithfulness is forever) reverberates throughout Book V to a total of up to thirty-one times. It is a phrase that encapsulates YHWH's loyalty to Israel in their time of need, but also an expression of YHWH's commitment to sustain Israel throughout the turbulent post-exilic period and far beyond that. Throughout Book V faithfulness is the celebrated characteristic of YHWH's exclusive kingship, because in faithfulness YHWH conquered the nations, their rulers and their deities, thus rendering YHWH the sovereign reigning deity. It is also the feature of an enduring kingship as thirty-one times it is preceded by the phrase **לְעוֹלָם** (forever). The kingship of YHWH is thus universal, exclusive and everlasting. By all means, YHWH's faithfulness which is expressive of YHWH's kingship is boundless in every aspect. Although the term **חֶסֶד**

(goodness/faithfulness) is not verbally applied in Psalm 139, the content of Psalm 139 serves as an affirmation to and description of YHWH's infinite faithfulness and boundless kingship. The faithfulness and by implication the exclusive kingship of YHWH is expressed in Psalm 139 through relating YHWH's omniscience, omnipresence and omnipotence. YHWH reveals faithfulness to Israel by knowing all the details of their trials and tribulations, by being present amidst trying circumstances and by aiding them amidst their hardship. YHWH's faithfulness to Israel is ultimately revealed in Psalm 139 through relating YHWH's intimacy with David as the representative of the entire faith community.

Throughout the *Psalter* YHWH's kingship is accompanied by two primary motifs: That of YHWH as Creator,³⁸⁵ and that of YHWH as Defender (Ollenburger, 1987:54). Both these themes enjoy prominence throughout Book V of the *Psalter*. Proclamations such as “*My help comes from the Lord the Maker of heaven and earth*” (Ps. 121:2) and “*He makes clouds to rise from the ends of the earth; he sends lightning with the rain and brings out the wind from his storehouses*” (Ps. 135:7) asserts YHWH's might over all natural forces and is pertinent portrayals of YHWH as Creator in Book V. Throughout the first eighteen verses of Psalm 139 the psalmist ponders YHWH's nature. The theme colouring verses 1-18 is that of YHWH's יָדַע (knowledge). The psalmist reflects on the fact that YHWH is aware of everything the psalmist does (vv. 1-12) and everything the psalmist is (vv. 13-18). As the psalmist comes to terms with a deity that is intimately acquainted with every move the psalmist makes, whether the psalmists יָשָׁב (sit) or קָוָם (rise), whether the psalmist אָרַח (wander) or רָבַע (lie down) the psalmist is brought to an epiphany. This revelation of the psalmist is made known to the reader in verse 13: כִּי־אַתָּה קָנִיתָ כִּלְיֹתַי (Because you created my kidneys). Kidneys are synonymous with a human being's innermost self. YHWH's creation of a human being is more than just a matter of biological craftsmanship, it is a matter of

³⁸⁵ Ollenburger (1987:54-55) illustrates the connection between YHWH's Kingship and the motif of YHWH as creator by listing some examples, which includes: Ps. 93 which depicts the kingship of YHWH as going hand in hand with YHWH's power over creation (v.3); Ps. 29 illustrates the combination of YHWH's kingship with YHWH's control over the waters; Ps. 24 testifies to YHWH the King being the designated creator of the earth; Ps. 89 declares YHWH's Kingship over the heavens, the earth and the sea. These are only a few examples. For an exposition on the combination of the Kingship of YHWH with the motif of YHWH as creator, see Ollenburger (1987:23-44).

moral deftness. YHWH's creation of the psalmist is described as רָקַם (to weave) which denotes the formation of a human being as a form of art. Not only is YHWH's sovereignty described using the psalmist's creation, but also by the fact that this unformed embryo, which once was the psalmist, has a preordained life that is already planned and documented by YHWH. YHWH's creative action reaches further than just the formation of the human being, YHWH's creative action endures for the rest of the psalmist's days. This is the reason for YHWH's penetrating knowledge of the psalmist's whereabouts (vv. 1-4) and for the intimately deep familiarity with which YHWH anticipates the psalmist's next action (vv. 5-12). YHWH is the Creator who formed the psalmist in the mother's womb. Through the reverence in Psalm 139 for YHWH as the life-giving Creator that is involved in human life from before conception until death, the supremacy and kingship of YHWH is affirmed.

Furthermore, Book V also depicts YHWH as a warrior and defender of Israel. In Psalms 110:5 the psalmist declares: *"The Lord is at your right hand; he will crush kings on the day of his wrath"* - a clear declaration of YHWH's guardianship. In Psalms 140-143 constant petitions are made to YHWH's guard in requests such as: *"Rescue me, O Lord, from evil men; protect me from men of violence"* (Ps. 140:2) and *"In your unfailing love, silence my enemies; destroy all my foes, for I am your servant"* (Ps. 143:12). The theme of YHWH as a defender in Book V is further expressed by the self-descriptive titles the psalmist uses, such as שָׁפַל (lowly), הֵלֵל (helpless), אֶבְיוֹן (needy) and עָנִי (poor). YHWH in turn is described as the bastion and emancipator of the destitute - a function derivative of YHWH's status as King (Ollenburger, 1987:55). The theme of guardianship and protection is expressive not only of YHWH's kingship but of the exclusivity of YHWH's kingship, as YHWH's protection of Israel is an assertion of YHWH's power over enemy nations, their rulers and deities. In Psalm 139 YHWH also undertakes the role of protector and guardian. The first instance in Psalm 139 that exhibits this trait of YHWH is found in verse 5 where the psalmist postulates צִרְתָּנִי אַחֲרַי וּקְדָמַי (behind and in front you shut me in). YHWH is described as fortifying the psalmist from all sides. This reflection is further strengthened by the declaration: כִּפְּכָהּ: עָלַי וַתִּשֶׂת יָדְךָ עָלַי (and you have laid your hand on me). Throughout Book V the hand of

YHWH is symbolically used to refer to both YHWH's creative³⁸⁶ and protective³⁸⁷ actions. In verse 10 the psalmist states that no matter where the psalmist is to be found in all of creation, there the hand of YHWH will both נָהַג (guide) and אָחַז (grasp) the psalmist. The psalmist of Psalm 139 thus explicates assurance and trust in YHWH's protection. Through the notion of defender YHWH's supremacy and all-conquering, thus exclusive kingship is affirmed.

This sheds a light on the psalmist's petition in verses 19-22. In these verses, a seemingly disruptive plea breaks through the serene realisation of divine presence. It is a plea to the intervention of YHWH in a situation prompted by evil oppressors. The transgressions of these evil oppressors are that יֹאמְרוּ לְמִזְמָה (they speak of evil against you [YHWH]). Based on the intimacy established with YHWH in verses 1-18 the psalmist takes any transgression against YHWH as one against him-/herself. The psalmist expresses revulsion against the so-called haters of YHWH, which the psalmist now takes to be also his/her enemies. This prompts the psalmist to petition to YHWH the defender of Israel's for protection against these evil oppressors. This plea follows in accord to the realisation of YHWH's divine guardianship. As the King who created the psalmist and is intimately acquainted with the psalmist, it naturally follows that YHWH would be the protector of the psalmist.

Ultimately Psalm 139 is part of the final davidic *Psalter*, which brings the theme of YHWH's exclusive kingship to its climax by placing Psalms 138-145 in the servant David's mouth. As a confession made by David, Psalm 139 aims to promote the exclusivity of YHWH's kingship by accentuating YHWH's superior knowledge as the Creator-god, YHWH's ubiquity and YHWH's supremacy and by petitioning the intervention of YHWH.

As a result, within the framework of Book V of the *Psalter* and the theme of the exclusive kingship of YHWH, Psalm 139 maintains a natural flow of thought. It innately proceeds that application can only follow admission. In Psalm 139:1-18 admission is made to the exclusive kingship of YHWH, providing the reader with a description of

³⁸⁶ Cf. Pss. 119:73; 138:8; 143:5.

³⁸⁷ Cf. Pss. 109:27; 111:7; 119:173; 136:12; 138:7; 139:10; 144:7, 11.

what the exclusive kingship of YHWH looks like. It is YHWH being able to know everything, being present everywhere and having the ability to do anything. This is then followed by an application to YHWH's intervention against evil oppressors. It is YHWH taking on the role of defender and protector of all who call on YHWH's name. Within this framework verses 19-22 does not seem to obscure the movement of Psalm 139. Instead, it seems to add value to the preceding statements about YHWH in verses 1-18 by proving that the psalmist is convinced of what is claimed in the verses preceding the request for intervention.

6.7 Synthesis

In chapter 6 the primary focus was the still greater unit of which Psalm 139 forms a part of, i.e. Psalms 107-150, also known as Book V of the *Psalter*. In this chapter, the literary relationship that exists between Psalm 139 and the rest of Book V was assessed. The objective of this chapter was to inquire into the arrangement of Book V of the *Psalter*, with the purpose of better understanding the placement of Psalm 139 within this broader collection, and to determine the potential relationship that binds Psalm 139 in an editorial entity with Psalms 107-150. To accomplish this Book V of the *Psalter* was scrutinised for repetitive semantic influences and theological discourse. Psalm 139 was then related to these semantic and theological themes to discern how it fits into Book V of the *Psalter*.

A study into the composition and redactional grouping of Book V of the *Psalter* revealed that it is the final book in the five-part division of the *Psalter*. Where Books I-III are coloured by a sombre tone as it is dominated by laments about the failure of the davidic monarchy, Book IV indicates the turning point and reorientation of the nation, redirecting their hope from the davidic monarchy to the kingship of YHWH. In Book V the hope of Israel reaches a climax as it testifies to the nation's return from exile and the re-establishment of the temple and re-envisioning of the faith. A brief overview was provided of the current research on the composition and redactional grouping of Book V, after which due regard was given to the rounded narrative structure of Book V and how the parts fit together to create the whole.

A summary of the redactional framework of Book V was provided to aid in navigating the editorial purpose and consequently the narrative of Book V of the *Psalter*. This study provided a holistic view of the meta-narrative presented by Book V as it is portrayed by its compositions and collections and the way they are ordered in relation to each other. It was revealed that Book V is descriptive of a contemplative journey from exile to Zion. This journey starts as Israel is brought out of Babylonian captivity to Jerusalem and Mount Zion, the place symbolic of YHWH's presence and reign. During this second exodus, the pilgrims are directed towards the universal and exclusive kingship of YHWH.

This study reveals that Book V is progressively structured to convey the exclusive kingship of YHWH by positioning a davidic collection at the beginning (Pss. 108-110) and end (Pss. 138-145) of Book V. In both collections praise for YHWH is placed in the mouth of David. At first, David is positioned alongside YHWH, but ultimately David assumes the role of subordinate with the duty of making known the mighty and redemptive deeds of YHWH the King. David undertakes the function of testifying to the universal kingdom and exclusive kingship of YHWH, calling on all of Israel, the nations and the rest of creation to recognise the exclusive kingship of YHWH. In between the two davidic collections that illustrate the progression of the narrative of Book V, is the three main themes which serve to support the exclusivity of YHWH's kingship. First, YHWH's exclusive kingship is conveyed through remembering history. Psalms 111 and 112 along with the *Pesah*-Hallel (Pss. 113-118) testifies to YHWH's saving acts and provision for Israel during the first exodus. This is followed by Psalm 119 which asserts the realisation that submission to the exclusive reign of YHWH is bound by adherence to the Torah. The final liturgical unit, the *Šîr hama'ălōt* psalms (Pss. 120-134) relates the prominence of Zion as the chosen dwelling of YHWH and the symbol of YHWH's exclusive kingly rule. Circling back to the theme of history is Psalms 135-137 which reminds Israel of how YHWH saved them from Egyptian slavery and follows by reminding them of how YHWH saved them from Babylonian exile.

In this study a semantic profile of Book V of the *Psalter* revealed a definite celebratory undertone as a consistent call to praise YHWH is made via the use of the verbs הלל

(to praise) and ידה (give thanks/praise). It further revealed the use of the unique phrase הללויה (hallelujah) that is strategically, and possibly editorially positioned throughout Book V and reserved for the celebration of the universal and exclusive kingship of YHWH. The post-exilic community is described as שפל (lowly), רל (helpless), אביון (needy) and עני (poor). Although liberated from exile, the post-exilic community was still under constant persecution of evil oppressor called the רשע (wicked). However, they are constantly redeemed by the חסד (goodness/faithfulness) and אמת (truth/loyalty) of YHWH. For this reason the phrase כי לעולם חסדו (for his faithfulness is forever) is repeated thirty-one times throughout Book V. This semantic study also revealed that David is no longer referred to by the title of מלך (king). In Book V this title is reserved for YHWH. Although rulers of enemy nations are also called by this title, every time mention is made of another monarch is mentioned it is done in a way that asserts YHWH's superior reign. Throughout Book V the two lexemes ירושלים (Jerusalem) and ציון (Zion) functions prominently as the locality of YHWH's kingship and reign. This study also revealed that Book V is open-ended as Psalm 145:21 invites כל־בשר (all flesh) to bless the name of YHWH. Psalms 146-150 continues this bid by imperatively making the same call.

This study has found that the structural markers in Book V of the *Psalter* translates into a multi-layered theological discourse. The davidic frame within which the content of Book V has placed points to a continuation of the royal theology of Books I and II, focusing on YHWH's aid to the Judean king. However, the theocratic theological discourse initiated in Book IV persists throughout Book V. This overarching davidic theme enjoys prominence and nuances the theocratic theology of Book V by assisting the reader in navigating the editorial purpose and narrative of its content. The royal theology focusing on YHWH's aid to the Judean king is then infused with a theocratic theology of government by divine guidance. As David does not lose his prominence in Book V, but simply takes on a new role as servant and priest-king, Book V presents the reader with a theocentric royal theology.

Throughout this study, the prominent theme that arose from Book V of the *Psalter* is that of the exclusive kingship of YHWH. Psalms 108-110 sees David the subservient priest-king becoming the voice affirming YHWH's universal kingship. The psalmist then relates the themes of history, Torah and Zion as affirmations of YHWH's supremacy and kingship. Circling back to David in Psalms 138-145 and bringing Book V to a close is the admittance of David to the superiority of YHWH. David is no longer referred to as מֶלֶךְ (king) and now assumes the title of עֶבֶד (servant). Then a declaration is placed in the mouth of the servant David in Psalm 145:1 stating that: "*I will exalt you, my God the King...*" It is not David the king who acknowledges YHWH as his co-counsel, but rather David the servant who submits to the exclusivity of YHWH's kingship. David is the voice declaring YHWH's triumphant and exclusive rulership by asserting that YHWH's מְלָכּוּת (kingdom) will remain forever (Ps. 145:13). In conclusion to the entire Book V and the entire *Psalter*, all the kings of the earth are called to join in praising YHWH, thus they are called not only to acknowledge YHWH's superiority but also to admit to the exclusivity of YHWH's kingship and rule.

Finally, this study concludes with a comparison that is drawn between Psalms 139 and the dominant theme that arose from an exposition on Book V of the *Psalter*. The comparison revealed that Psalm 139:1-18 can be broadly interpreted as praise for YHWH as its basic mood is that of admiration, reverence and glorification. The call to praise is further observed in verse 14 when the psalmist exclaims praise for the way YHWH created him/her and for the wonderful works YHWH has made. Praise is the direct result of acknowledgement and acceptance of YHWH's exclusive kingship. Consequently, Psalm 139 becomes an exaltation to the exclusivity of YHWH's rule. Although the term חֶסֶד (goodness/faithfulness) is not directly noted in Psalm 139, the content of Psalm 139 is a description of YHWH's faithfulness. The faithfulness and by implication the exclusive kingship of YHWH is expressed in Psalm 139 by means of relating YHWH's omniscience, omnipresence and omnipotence. Both the tasks of creating and defending are tasks tied up with kingship. Psalm 139 illustrates YHWH's sovereignty through YHWH's creation of the psalmist, thus affirming YHWH's supremacy and exclusive kingship. In Psalm 139 YHWH also undertakes the role of protector and guardian. Through the notion of defender YHWH's supremacy and all-conquering, thus exclusive kingship is affirmed. The psalmist petition to the

intervention of YHWH in a situation prompted by evil oppressors (vv. 19-22) follows in accordance to the realisation of YHWH's divine guardianship and thus further serves to underline the exclusivity of YHWH's kingship.

Using an exposition of Book V of the *Psalter*, this chapter revealed that within the framework of the exclusive kingship of YHWH, Psalm 139 maintains a natural flow of thought. Verses 1-18 serves as an acknowledgement to YHWH's exclusive kingship, describing it as omniscient, omnipresent and omnipotent. Verses 19-22 then follows with a petition to the universal and exclusive King to intervene in a situation caused by evil oppressors. Within this framework verses, 19-22 do not seem to obscure the movement of Psalm 139. On the contrary, verses 19-22 seems to add to the realisation of YHWH's exclusive kingship that is expressly stated in the foregoing verses. The fact that the theme of YHWH's exclusive kingship naturally flows through verses 1-18 and then through verses 19-24, may suggest compositional unity. However, considering the divergent tones of these two separate parts of Psalm 139, it is more likely that Psalm 139 was purposefully edited to display two dimensions of YHWH's exclusive kingship: the realisation and praise for YHWH as the exclusive King, and consequently the appeal to YHWH's exclusive kingship. The study of Psalm 139 within the framework of Book V of the *Psalter* concedes that Psalm 139 was subjected to purposeful editorial activity within the composition and redactional grouping of Book V of the *Psalter*.

CHAPTER 7

FINAL SYNTHESIS

7.1 Introduction

Driven by the conviction that every psalm is an independent piece of poetry, past studies have proven the individuality of the psalms to be of prominence. This has led to form-critical and cult-functional approaches to the psalms functioning at the foreground of psalm studies. Contemporary psalm studies show increasing concern towards investigating the specific placement of a psalm within the various collections it is embedded. This approach values the editorial organisation of the *Psalter* and questions how the arrangement and structuring of collections in the *Psalter* influence the meaning of individual psalms. Any comprehensive study of an individual psalm does no longer consider the psalm as an isolated entity. Instead, studying a psalm gives due attention to the redactional groups of which it forms a part of. The result of this approach is that not only the content, but also the position of a psalm determines its theological meaning, and consequently contributes to a better theological understanding of the collections of which it forms a part of and the theological message of the *Psalter* as a whole.

This thesis aimed to contribute to the study of Psalm 139 by adhering to these recent trends in psalm studies. This study took a closer look at the disunity in Psalm 139 brought about by verses 19-22, that seems in discord with the tone and theology of the rest of the psalm. This was done by studying Psalm 139 on a synchronic level evaluating the linguistic features of the psalm. It was then followed by a diachronic study of Psalm 139, taking the different textual relationships in which Psalm 139 is embedded into consideration.

Chapter 7 will provide a synopsis of the preceding study. It is a discussion of the methodology employed, the results yielded by each chapter and the conclusion

reached at the end of the study. This chapter will conclude by evaluating the hypothesis of this study and by making some final remarks on the study of Psalm 139.

In this chapter, a surmised answer will be provided to the question: how can the seemingly out of place plea to the condemnation of evil oppressors in verses 19-22 be reconciled with the peaceful tone of the realisation of divine presence in verses 1-18 and 23-24, when taking the placement of Psalm 139, within its various collections, into consideration?

7.2 Research methodology

The research method for this study consisted of literature as well as a literary-exegetical study. The research method employed in this study was on both a textual as well as a contextual level, which included an intra-, inter- and extra-textual analysis of Psalm 139. At first, a synchronic study of Psalm 139 was conducted to better understand the textual features of the text. This was done to inform the researcher on certain linguistic clues in the text with a specific focus on the structural unity of Psalm 139. This was followed by a diachronic study of the psalm, investigating the different contexts in which Psalm 139 is positioned. First, the relationships that Psalm 139 share with its direct neighbouring psalm (Pss. 138 and 140) was evaluated. This was followed by an inquiry into the role and place of Psalm 139 within the final davidic *Psalter* (Pss. 138-145) as well as its position and function within Book V of the *Psalter* (Pss. 107-150).

The research method was applied as follows in each separate chapter:

Chapter 2 consisted of a literature review that recapitulated and surveyed the current state of research on Psalm 139. The primary focus of the literature review fell on the comprehension of scholars on the unity of Psalm 139. The study revealed that scholars understand and deal with the break between verses 18 and 19 differently. This chapter further exposed the ambiguity in the understanding of Psalm 139 caused by form-critical and cult-functional approaches to the psalm. The different categories of *genre* and *Sitz im Leben* under which scholars have classified Psalm 139 were critically evaluated. The literature review also included a summary of what has already

been done in terms of a redactional-critical evaluation of Psalm 139 in terms of the psalm's placement within the greater context of Book V of the *Psalter*.

Chapter 3 consisted of a synchronic analysis of Psalm 139. A literary-exegetical (or intra-textual) study of Psalm 139 was done. This included a morphological, syntactical, structural and poetic analysis of the psalm to assess the interrelatedness of all textual elements. The literary-exegetical analysis of Psalm 139 identified the textual characteristics of the psalm as a basis for the reconstruction of the unique thinking process that resulted in the text as we find it in the Hebrew Bible. This process was followed by meaningful suggestions offered about the content and structure of the psalm and how individual building blocks add to the meaning of the psalm. The literary study of Psalm 139 served as a basis for further exposition on the psalm's association with the compositions in which it was editorially placed.

Chapter 4 consisted of a diachronic analysis of Psalm 139 by way of exploring the editorial history of the psalm. This chapter was the first step in adhering to recent trends in psalm studies not to focus on the individuality of the psalm, but rather to consider Psalm 139 as part of a unique arrangement of psalms in the greater context of the *Psalter*. In this chapter, an inter-textual study was carried out on the relationship Psalm 139 shares with the psalms immediately adjacent to it, i.e. Psalms 138 and 140. An analysis of Psalms 138 and 140 was respectively done, exploring each psalm's characteristics. This was followed by a comparative study between the textual features of Psalm 139 and that of Psalms 138 and 140 respectively. Inter-textual similarities and differences between the texts were then highlighted.

Chapter 5 focused on the larger unit of psalms in which Psalm 139 is embedded. In this chapter, the composition and redactional grouping of Psalm 138-145 was explored to discern the local-narrative conveyed by this final davidic collection. The final davidic *Psalter* was scrutinised to detect repetitive semantic influences and to expose the theological discourse conveyed by this particular collection. Then, the positioning of Psalm 139 within this collection was assessed by evaluating the literary relationship it shares with the rest of the psalms in the collection and further by relating it to the theological framework, to understand the redactional context within which the content of Psalm 139 acquires form and meaning. Furthermore, the two core themes

presented by the final davidic *Psalter* was underscored, the themes of dependence on and protection of YHWH. Finally, Psalm 139 was shown to be conveying both these themes.

Chapter 6 took a broader focus by considering the still greater unit of the psalms of which Psalm 139 forms a part of, i.e. Book V of the *Psalter*. In this chapter, the composition and redactional grouping of Psalms 107-150 was explored to discern the meta-narrative conveyed by the collection of psalms that brings the *Psalter* to a close. The semantic profile of Book V was explored to discern keywords and phrases that distinguish it from the rest of the *Psalter*. The theological discourse of Book V was examined to come to a better understanding of the redactional framework of this collection. From the semantic profile and the theological discourse of Book V arose the recurring theme of YHWH's exclusive kingship. Finally, Psalm 139 was related to the recurring theme of Book V, illustrating Psalm 139 to be a declaration of YHWH's exclusive kingship over the psalmist, other nations and all of creation.

7.3 Conclusions

This section provides a summary of the conclusion reached in each chapter. This synopsis will provide the basis from which the hypothesis of this study will be answered.

7.3.1 Chapter 2: Literary overview

The objectives for this chapter were:

- To inquire into how scholars have addressed the question of the unity and/or division of Psalm 139 with specific reference to verses 19-22.
- To inquire into the different genre allotments of Psalm 139.
- To aid the interpreter in understanding the contradictory and shortcoming nature of existing research on Psalm 139.
- To aid the interpreter in identifying the pitfalls when confronted with the ambiguous nature of Psalm 139.

- To create a framework from which the current study on Psalm 139 can draw insights.

Regarding the objectives set out for this chapter, the following conclusions have been reached:

- A summary of the existing literature on Psalm 139 reveals that scholars primarily focus on two aspects about the psalm: first the unity and/or division of the psalm; and second the *genre* and *Sitz im Leben* of the psalm.
- Scholars that focus on the structural unity and/or division of Psalm 139 attempt to make sense of the great linguistic and theological divide that occurs in the text between verses 18 and 19. Primarily there are three trends maintained when attempting to make sense of the dissension in Psalm 139. The first tendency supports a definite division of Psalm 139 into two parts. The focus of this approach to the text is the palpable dissonance in form, tone and content between verses 1-18 and 19-24. This approach takes the easy way out by not attempting to understand the motive for the differing tones in the psalm and simply dividing the psalms into two parts with two different themes. The second tendency is to divide the psalm into a multiple of stanzas, each representing its own theme. This approach leads to even more confusion on how the structure of Psalm 139 should be understood, as each scholar attempts his/her structural layout and thus further fails to explain the conflicting tones in the psalm. The third tendency amongst scholars, which is based on the *inclusio* formed with verses 1 and 23-24, is to treat Psalm 139 as an undividable unity that communicates a single theme. None of these approaches fully account for the discrepancies in the text and the multi-layered theological discourse present in the text.
- Some scholars base their interpretation of Psalm 139 primarily on a form-critical and cult-functional analysis. Those partaking in this category of research go to extreme lengths to prove the placement of Psalm 139 within a pre-determined *genre*-category. There is a lengthy list of *genre* classifications assigned to Psalm 139 on which scholars cannot seem to agree which includes: hymn, individual lament, song of thanksgiving, etc. A definite *genre* classification

eludes scholars because there are no historical markers in the text hinting to the *Sitz im Leben* of Psalm 139. If scholars cannot conclusively say what the circumstances were that gave rise to the composition of Psalm 139, it naturally follows that scholars cannot postulate in what circumstances and religious context the psalm was utilised, thus making a *genre* classification impossible.

- It was illustrated that research on Psalm 139 has given minimal attention to the psalm's placement within the collections of which it forms a part. Some scholars briefly considered the placement of Psalm 139 within the greater compositional unit of Book V (Pss. 107-150). Where an attempt at a redactional perspective on Psalm 139 has been applied, scholars correspond on their deduction that Psalm 139 demonstrates a theme of unreserved reliance on YHWH in correlation to the theological profile of Book V which is a YHWH-centred religion instead of the cult-centric religion seen in Books I-III. However, the narrowness of what is said on the subject of the editorial adaptations and positioning of Psalm 139 indicates that not enough research has been done on the topic.

7.3.2 Chapter 3: Literary analysis

The objectives for this chapter were:

- To perform a literary analysis of Psalm 139.
- To gain a better understanding of different textual features of Psalm 139.
- To determine the interrelationships that exists between textual features.
- To gain insight into what the different textual features endeavours to communicate to the reader.
- To address the interpretational problems concerning the structural unity of the text, with a specific focus on verses 19-22.
- To aid the interpreter in understanding the text on a literary level.
- To aid the interpreter by proposing a structure for the text based on textual features.
- To address interpretational problems about the *genre* and the *Sitz im Leben* of the text.

- To create a framework of understanding of the text on which subsequent chapters can build.

Regarding the objectives set out for this chapter, the following conclusions have been reached:

- In this chapter, an exegesis on Psalm 139 was done to obtain a better understanding of the textual features of the psalm and to aid the interpreter in understanding the text on a literary level.
- The introductory phrase in verse 1 “YHWH you search me and you know me” reveals the theme of the entire Psalm 139 and invites the reader into a comprehension of the text in its entirety. These words are words of the psalmist’s realisation of YHWH’s omniscient, omnipresent and omnipotent capabilities. They are also words that stir the awareness of YHWH’s intimate participation in human life. A line of thought that is repeated at the closing of the psalm when the psalmist raises the request to be scrutinised by YHWH (v. 23) and to be led by YHWH (v. 24). With first the acknowledgement of, and then the appeal to YHWH’s all-seeing, all-knowing and ever-present abilities, the theme of the psalm is brought full circle, binding the content of the psalm via an *inclusio*, in a comprehensible unit.
- The psalmist decoratively makes use of poetic techniques on the level of sound, pattern and semantics to explicate the when, where and how of YHWH’s involvement in human life. In Psalm 139 preference is given to the poetic techniques of parallelism and chiasm presented in the form of merisms to express YHWH’s presence throughout the whole of creation and to underline the fact that humankind is unable to escape this magnificent omnipresence.
- The interchanging between the two subjects (YHWH and the psalmist) throughout Psalm 139 reveals an intimacy between the author and YHWH that is unequalled in the rest of the *Psalter*. Contrary to popular opinion, this study has shown the psalmist to be comfortable with YHWH’s presence. Even the idea of predestination seems to be of great consolation to the psalmist.
- This study has shown that Psalm 139 can be structurally divided into five stanzas and eleven strophes that stand with each other. All stanzas and

strophes are connected by the theme of YHWH's omnipresence. Even verses 19-22 that does not seem suitable to the rest of the psalm, is connected to its preceding and following stanzas by the realisation of divine presence. The call to the condemnation of evil oppressors is precisely directed towards this all-encompassing knowledge of YHWH. The theme of an all-knowing, almighty and ever-present deity bridges the gap between verse 18 and 19.

- An exegetical study of Psalm 139 has shown that although verses 1-18 and 23-24 shares the theme of YHWH's omniscience, omnipresence and omnipotence with verses 19-22, it unquestionably differs in tone. This makes the form-critical analysis of Psalm 139 an anomaly. This study has illustrated scholars failed attempts to form-critically classify Psalm 139. The mixed underlying tones present in the psalm halts conformity in views as some scholars give prevalence to one classification above the other. Furthermore, owing to a lack of historical references in Psalm 139, a definite *Sitz im Leben* also evades the interpreters of the text. The greatest shortfall of a form-critical approach to Psalm 139 is that it cannot reconcile the condemnation of evil oppressors in verses 19-22 with the realisation of divine presence in verses 1-18 and 23-24.
- A form-critical study of Psalm 139 lacks in aiding the reader to understand the unity, *genre* and significance of the text. This is because form-criticism approaches the text in isolation. This study has illustrated the growing need to study Psalm 139, not in isolation, but within the relationships in which it is embedded with surrounding texts, to know if Psalm 139 should be understood as a compositional whole or rather as a redactional ensemble.

7.3.3. Chapter 4: Redactional frame of Psalm 138-140

The objectives for this chapter were:

- To perform a literary analysis of both Psalm 138 and Psalm 140.
- To gain a better understanding of different textual features of Psalm 138 and Psalm 140, respectively.
- To gain insight into what the different textual features endeavour to communicate to the reader.

- To gain insight into the interrelatedness of all textual features on a literary level.
- To establish the textual relationship that exists between Psalms 138 and 139 as well as Psalms 139 and 140.
- To highlight similarities and differences between Psalm 139 and Psalms 138 and 140.
- To aid the interpreter in understanding the placement of Psalm 139 in between Psalms 138 and 140.
- To create a framework for the inquiry of the placement of Psalm 139 within the greater collection of the Psalms of David (Pss. 138-145) in the subsequent chapter.

Regarding the objectives set out for this chapter, the following conclusions have been reached:

- In this chapter, exegetical analysis of Psalms 138 and 140 was done and proceeded by a comparison made between Psalm 139 and Psalms 138 and 140 respectively.
- This literary-exegetical study of Psalm 138 illustrates the psalmist dedicating him-/herself to praise YHWH 'in front of gods.' This phrase indicates the unrestricted and public nature of the psalmist's praise. This study has shown the importance of the public nature of the psalmist's praise as it overflows to the kings of other nations who also begin to participate in praising YHWH. Thus, Psalm 138 demonstrates the glory of YHWH becoming universally known. The action of the kings is opposed to the actions of the psalmist's enemies who fail to join in the exaltation of YHWH and consequently undermines YHWH's universal Lordship. This leads to YHWH withdrawing YHWH's hand from them and only observing them from afar. This observation of the psalmist leads to the conclusion that YHWH knows the intentions of every individual and only those who are willing to acknowledge and praise YHWH's universal Lordship enjoys the privilege of intimacy with YHWH. The psalmist closes Psalm 138 by affirming the goodness of YHWH and by appealing to this goodness as a fortification. Ultimately, it is the goodness of YHWH that serves as the basis for the praise of YHWH across people and kingdoms.

- A literary-exegetical analysis of Psalm 140 reveals a completely different tone to that of Psalm 138. In Psalm 140 the focus is turned toward ill-intentioned people of the psalmist. Their nature is derived from designations such as: wicked and men of violence. These evil oppressors are described as concocting evil motives in their hearts and stirring up conflicts with their venomous tongues. The psalmist, however, launches a counter-attack by turning to the aid of the omnipotent YHWH and confessing trust in YHWH while pleading for the demise of evil oppressors. The psalmist pleads with YHWH with phrases such as: ‘save me,’ ‘guard me,’ and ‘keep me.’ This underlines the theme of Psalm 140 as persecution versus protection. The psalmist pleads for justice. Amid the attack the psalmist still finds the time to praise the unfailing righteousness of YHWH, stating that YHWH will side with the meek and the virtuous.
- A comparison is carried out between Psalms 138 and 139 and displays a strong literary relationship between the two texts as is evident from the wide array of shared verbal connections. The role-players in both psalms are the same: YHWH, the psalmist and the enemies of the psalmist except for the added ‘kings of the earth’ in Psalm 138. In both psalms, there is a strong “I-you” relationship between the psalmist and YHWH which underlines the psalmist’s realisation of dependence on YHWH. Both psalms express the dual-nature of YHWH. YHWH is both described as sovereign and exalted above humans, but simultaneously involved in the lives of human beings. This serves to underscore a shared theme between Psalms 138 and 139, i.e. the universality of YHWH. In Psalm 138 the deeds of YHWH are made universally known by the psalmist, while in Psalm 139 the psalmist describes what the universality of YHWH entails. In both Psalms 138 and 139, there is an underlying tone of thankfulness resulting from the knowledge of YHWH’s universal presence which results in praise. Both psalms also share the concept of ‘eternity.’ Psalm 138 claims YHWH’s goodness to be everlasting, while in Psalm 139 the psalmist pleads with YHWH to be lead in an everlasting way.
- Psalms 139:1-18 coincides with the basic mood of Psalm 138. The basic mood of Psalm 138 is that of thanksgiving, i.e. a song that gives thanks to YHWH for YHWH’s deliverance. The basic mood of Psalm 139:1-18 is that of a hymn, i.e.

a song that extolls praise for YHWH's righteousness. The *genre* classification of thanksgiving and hymn correspond in the praise that is presented to YHWH.

- This study has shown that the same basic theological premise is shared by Psalms 138 and 139. Both psalms touch on the universal nature of YHWH, both psalms appeal to YHWH's guardianship and both psalms have the communal aim of praising YHWH.
- A comparison that was done between Psalms 139 and 140 also exposed similarities in the form of linguistic and theological connections. The distinct "I-you" relationship points to an intimate relationship between the psalmist and YHWH. The same role-players feature in both psalms, but while the focal point of Psalm 139 is YHWH, in Psalm 140 the focal point is the psalmist's enemies. In Psalm 139 the enemies are briefly mentioned, while Psalm 140 is an exposition of the enemy's relentless pursuit of the psalmist. Three overall themes are shared between Psalm 139 and 140: First, both psalms express and celebrate the realisation of the all-encompassing presence of YHWH; second, both psalms express the hope for the destruction of and protection from evil oppressors; third, both psalms present YHWH with the praise that YHWH rightfully deserves.
- The basic mood of Psalm 140 coincides with the basic mood of Psalm 139:19-22. In Psalm 140 the basic characteristics of a lament are discerned. The psalmist complains about the merciless attacks of evil oppressors and pleads with YHWH for the deliverance from these evil oppressors. This visibly relates to the psalmist's plea in verses 19-22. A form-critical analysis of Psalm 139 reveals verses 19-24 to display traits of a lament.
- This chapter has shown that when a comparison is drawn between Psalm 139 and Psalm 138 and 140, it correlates to both. The greater part of Psalm 139, which focus on the praises of YHWH's omniscience, omnipresence and omnipotence (vv. 1-18) correlates to Psalm 138 which also praises YHWH's care and provision. The smaller part of Psalm 139, which focusses on the condemnation of evil oppressors (vv. 19-24) correlates to Psalm 140 on the premise of its bewailing of enemy oppressors. These few verses in Psalm 139 do not only express hate for enemies but also calls on YHWH to defeat these enemies. In the closing verses of Psalm 139, the psalmist disassociates with

the wicked by requesting YHWH to discern his/her ways to see if the psalmist is on the path of the righteous or the wicked.

- This chapter has shown that Psalm 139:1-18 enters into conversation with Psalm 138, while Psalm 139:19-22 enters into conversation with Psalm 140. Psalm 139:23-24 sums up both themes by asking YHWH to be led in a life that is according to YHWH's righteousness.

7.3.4 Chapter 5: Psalm 139 within the final davidic Psalter (Pss. 138-145)

The objectives for this chapter were:

- To give an overview of inter-textual relationships between Psalm 139 and the rest of the collection of the Psalms of David (Pss. 138-145).
- To gain a better understanding of textual features of the final collection of the Psalms of David.
- To gain insight into what the textual features communicate to the reader.
- To gain insight into the interrelatedness of all textual features to establish the textual relationship that exists between psalms in this collection.
- To highlight similarities and differences between Psalm 139 and the rest of the psalms in this collection.
- To aid the interpreter in understanding the placement of Psalm 139 in this final davidic collection.
- To become the framework for the interpretation of diverging tones present in Psalm 139 within the still greater collection of the psalm of Book V (Pss. 107-150) in the subsequent chapter.

Regarding the objectives set out for this chapter, the following conclusions have been reached:

- In this chapter, the literary relationship that exists between Psalm 139 and the rest of the psalms in the final davidic *Psalter* (Pss. 138-145) was assessed and the internal arrangement of this collection of psalms was evaluated. This was

done to better understand the redactional activity that led to the shaping of content and placement of Psalm 139 within the final davidic *Psalter*.

- It was found that the main distinguishing factor grouping Psalms 138-145 together in a separate unit, is its davidic superscripts. Because superscripts aid the interpreter in navigating the editorial purpose and the narrative of the *Psalter*, inquiry was made into the use of davidic designations and the evolution of the character of David throughout the *Psalter*. David is portrayed as a powerful monarch in Books I-III. In Book IV (the book of the exile) David is mostly absent. In Book V (the book of the return from exile) David makes a return in the form of historical references and superscripts in the psalms. However, now a new kind of kingship of David (or the davidic descendant) is imagined. There is a shift in royal regime – from davidic kingship to YHWH's universal rule. In Psalms 138-145 David assumes the priestly role, calling on the kings of other nations and all of creation to join in the praises of YHWH the universal King. In the final davidic *Psalter* the focus falls, not on davidic kingship, but on YHWH whose universal rule cannot be contained by boundaries.
- This study proved Psalms 138-145 to be concentrically structured. Psalms 140-143 are positioned at the centre of this structure and illustrate the weakness of the supplicant as he/she appeals for protection from YHWH against evil oppressors. Encapsulating this core of supplication is Psalms 139 and 144 aiding the reader in the realisation of YHWH's universal Kingship and rule and what it entails. Surrounding the entire collection and placed at its edges is Psalms 138 and 145 that sees the psalmist finding comfort in the realisation of YHWH's divine kingship and praising YHWH for it.
- A semantic profile of Psalms 138-145 reveals the psalmist (or David, to whom these psalms are ascribed) as the protagonist. Words descriptive of the psalmist's attitude includes 'humble', 'poor' and 'needy', and those descriptive of the psalmist's demeanour includes 'upright', 'servant' and 'righteous'. These terms are descriptive of someone who is dependent on YHWH's care and simultaneously of someone who is consciously aligned with and loyal to YHWH. The psalmist stands against the antagonists in Psalms 138-145, who is primarily described as the 'enemy' and the 'wicked.' These are people who

exercise evil against the psalmist as well as YHWH. The primary character of the final davidic *Psalter* is YHWH who is portrayed by the virtues of 'righteousness' and 'mercy/goodness' These virtues become the themes of YHWH's Kingship and rule in the final davidic *Psalter*. The psalmist is thus someone who openly admits and declares dependence on YHWH's Kingship against evil oppressors, while YHWH is the One who knows the psalmist, who stretches out a hand to the psalmist's aid and protection and who leads the psalmist in an everlasting way.

- The structural markers in the final davidic *Psalter* translate into a theocentric royal theology, suggesting that instead of aiding the Judean king, YHWH is the sovereign King appointed over all kings (including the Judean king). What is of importance in the final davidic *Psalter* is that the admittance to YHWH's universal kingship is placed in the mouth of David. David becomes the voice pleading for YHWH's protection and declaring dependence on YHWH. Consequently, a methodical relegation of the character of David is noticeable in Psalms 138-145.
- This study has shown two prominent themes that emerge from the final davidic *Psalter*, the themes of protection and dependence. Throughout the central collection (Pss. 140-143) the psalmist experienced maltreatment at the hands of evil oppressors. Turning to YHWH, the psalmist takes YHWH to be a place of refuge and protection against persecution. Amid the threat of evil oppressors, the psalmist realises his/her faintness and inability to protect him-/herself. The psalmist realises utmost dependence on YHWH to provide fortification and what this entails (Pss. 139 and 144). Through the realisation of dependence the psalmist takes YHWH as protector and subsequently expounds praise for YHWH's supreme rule and power over enemy opposition (Pss. 138 and 145).
- A comparison was drawn between the dominant themes, which was obtained through extensive exposition, of the final davidic *Psalter* and Psalm 139. This comparison exposed Psalm 139:1-18 to relate to the theme of a realisation of dependence on YHWH's universal kingship and rule as in these verses the psalmist comes to the realisation of YHWH's omnipresence, omnipotence and omniscience and how it is of aid to the psalmist. This comparison further exposed Psalm 139:19-22 to relate to the theme of appealing for YHWH's

protection as in these verses the psalmist makes a blunt appeal to YHWH to slay evil oppressors and guard the psalmist against them as those who transgress against YHWH is also the enemy of the psalmist. This observation is supported by the final verses of Psalm 139. In verse 23 the psalmist requests to be examined by YHWH, thus consciously admitting to dependence on YHWH's universal Kingship and rule, and in verse 24 the psalmist requests to be led in an everlasting way, thus petitioning for YHWH's guidance and protection against the influence of the wicked.

- Extensive exposition on Psalm 138-145 reveals that Psalm 139 fits comfortably into the final davidic *Psalter* as it relates to the dominant themes of dependence and protection displayed through the concentric structure of Psalms 138-145. The fact that both themes occur in Psalm 139 attests to a possible redactional altering of the psalm to ensure fluidity in the transition from Psalm 138, which carries the theme of the celebration of YHWH's universal Kingship, to Psalm 140, which carries the theme of appealing to YHWH's protection against evil oppressors. The fact that the two dominant themes of the final davidic *Psalter*, which is separately expressed through verses 1-18 (dependence) and verses 19-22 (protection), is then again repeated in verses 23-24 supports an argument for purposeful editorial activity in the composition of Psalm 139 and the redactional grouping of Psalms 138-145.

7.3.5 Chapter 6: Psalm 139 within Book V (Pss. 107-150)

The objectives for this chapter were:

- To understand Book V of the *Psalter* as a compositional unit with specific themes.
- To gain insight into the semantic and theological profile of Book V of the *Psalter* by inquiring into recurring lexemes and theological themes present in the collection.
- To gain insight into the structures, divisions and editorial units present in Book V of the *Psalter*.

- To gain insight into the place and function of the final davidic collection in Book V of the *Psalter*.
- To gain insight into the place and function of Psalm 139 in Book V of the *Psalter*.
- To aid the interpreter in comprehending individual parts as well as the whole of Psalm 139 within the framework of Book V of the *Psalter*.
- To become the framework in concluding the meaning and purpose of Psalm 139 within the different textual relationships it is embedded.

Regarding the objectives set out for this chapter, the following conclusions have been reached:

- In this chapter, the literary and theological character of Book V was scrutinised for repetitive semantic influence and theological discourse to better understand the editorial placement of Psalm 139 within this broader collection and to determine how it affects the unity of Psalm 139.
- A study into the compositional grouping of the *Psalter* reveals Book V to be the final book in a meta-narrative that can be divided into five parts. Books I-III tell the tale of the failed davidic monarchy, while Book IV tells the tale of the exile and the redirecting of Israel's hope from the davidic kingship and monarchy to divine kingship and monarchy. This notion is brought to a climax in Book V when the nation is allowed to return to Jerusalem. With the return from exile hope in YHWH as the divine ruler is affirmed with the re-establishment of the temple and the re-envisioning of the faith. This redactional framework aids in navigating the editorial purpose of Book V and how its collections and compositions are ordered with each other. Book V, being descriptive of a contemplative journey from the Babylonian exile to Jerusalem and Zion, places focus on YHWH's presence and exclusive kingship.
- This study argues that Book V is structured to progressively articulate YHWH's exclusive kingship by illustrating a progression in the realisation of divine presence and what it entails. This is primarily done by reviving the character of David in Book V and by strategically framing the content of Book V with two davidic collections, i.e. Psalms 108-110 and 138-145. In the first collection David, the iconic monarch of Israel is positioned alongside YHWH as co-ruler

of Israel. Ultimately, in the final davidic *Psalter*, David assumes the role of subordinate, expressing dependence on YHWH's protection and thus becoming submissive to YHWH with the duty of proclaiming the mighty and redemptive deeds of YHWH. David becomes the character testifying to the universal kingdom and exclusive kingship of YHWH as he calls on all of Israel, all the nations (and their rulers) as well as all of creation to join in his acknowledgement of YHWH's all-encompassing divine presence and exclusive reign.

- In between the first and final davidic collections of Book V, there are three main themes conveyed via psalms and collections of psalms to support the progression of thought on YHWH's divine presence and by implication of YHWH's exclusive kingship in Book V. First, YHWH's kingship is illustrated by way of recalling history. The twin psalms (Pss. 111 and 112) coupled with the *Pesaḥ*-Hallel (Pss. 113-118) lauds YHWH's redemptive acts and provision throughout the Egyptian exodus and the nation's sojourn through the wilderness. These psalms are editorially arranged to reflect on YHWH's transcendence above all nations as the King who is seated on high but simultaneously actively participating in creation. YHWH's saving acts throughout history serves as evidence to YHWH's divine presence and supremacy over all creation. Second, YHWH's kingship is illustrated by the prominence of the Torah. As the end of the *Pesaḥ*-Hallel is witness to the liberated Israel making their way through the 'gates of righteousness' entering Jerusalem and Zion as the seat of YHWH's reign, Psalm 119 asserts the realisation that submission to YHWH's divine presence as the exclusive King over all creation is bound by adherence to the Torah. For a post-exilic community adherence to the Torah was how they both accepted and honoured YHWH's divine presence as the exclusive King. Third, YHWH's kingship is illustrated by Jerusalem/Zion as the chosen dwelling of YHWH among Israel and the symbol of YHWH's reign. The liturgical unit called the *Šir hama'ālōt* psalms (Pss. 120-134) underlines the prominence of Zion as the place from which divine presence proceeds and the crux of YHWH's royal rule. Finally, the psalms circle back to history by once again relating YHWH's kingship through the remembrance of the first exodus (Pss. 135-136) and then by reminding

Israel of their second exodus (Ps. 137) and the sovereignty of YHWH over the Babylonians, their rulers and their deities.

- A celebratory undertone permeates the psalms in Book V. This editorial nature of Book V is made obvious by the frequent use of the verbs הָלַל (to praise) and יָדָה (give thanks/praise) and the unique interjection הַלְלֵי-יְהוָה (hallelujah) that is tactically employed throughout its content to celebrate the exclusive kingship of YHWH. The post-exilic community is not affluent, but rather destitute as they are often described as 'lowly,' 'helpless,' 'needy' and 'poor.' This attests to the fact that the post-exilic community was not free in every sense of the word, but rather still bound by their subservience as vassals to the Persian Empire, poverty and persecution by evil oppressors who are often referred to as the 'wicked.' It is only by the 'goodness/faithfulness' and 'loyalty' of their divine King that they are redeemed. Instead of praising the power of an earthly monarch, the phrase 'for his faithfulness is forever' is a commendation to the divine presence and kingship of YHWH. As a consequence, David is no longer referred to by the title of 'king' in Book V. Instead, this title is now reserved for YHWH. Whenever rulers of enemy nations are referred to as 'kings' it is always to assert YHWH's dominance over them and thus underlining the exclusivity of YHWH's kingship.
- In contrast to the other four books of the *Psalter*, Book V does not conclude. Instead, Book V has an open-ended invitation that calls on all flesh to bless the name of YHWH (Ps. 145:21). This is followed by Psalms 146-150 that simultaneously praise and summons YHWH's praise. The open-end of Book V may suggest the prolongation of the narrative of the *Psalter* in the lives of its readers. Those who read, pray and perform it are now called to live in the praises of YHWH's divine presence and exclusive kingship as it is illustrated throughout the *Psalter*.
- This study has found that all the structural markers of Book V translate into a multi-layered theological discourse. Its davidic frame underlines the royal theology of Books I-III which focus on YHWH's loyalty to the davidic covenant and king. Book IV, which gives narration to the exile, introduces a theocratic theological discourse insisting on YHWH's kingship. In Book V the overarching theme of the submission of the davidic king is intertwined with the theme of

YHWH's exclusive kingship and royal rule. David does not lose his prominence in Book V, he simply takes on a new role as priest-king who now serves to inform on YHWH's governance by divine guidance. Consequently, the reader of Book V is presented with a theocratic royal theology.

- This study has further shown the prominent theme of Book V to be that of the exclusive kingship of YHWH. In Psalm 108-110 the voice of the submissive priest-king David arose to assert YHWH's universal kingship. Then the psalmist narrates the themes of history (Pss. 111-112; 113-118; 135-137), the Torah (Ps. 119) and Zion (Pss. 120-134) as declarations of YHWH's divine presence and supreme kingship. Orbiting back to the now 'servant' David in Psalms 138-145 the reader finds the assertion to the superiority of YHWH above all people, nations, creation and deities placed in the mouth of the once-powerful king of Israel. David becomes the voice declaring the superiority and exclusivity of YHWH's kingship and kingdom and calls on all the kings of the earth to join in praising YHWH and admit to the exclusivity of YHWH's rule.
- In this study, a comparison is drawn between Psalm 139 and the dominant theme that arose from an exposition on the narrative, semantics and theological profile of Book V. A comparison revealed that Psalm 139:1-18 has a basic mood of admiration, reverence and glorification of YHWH, in other words, the first eighteen verses of Psalm 139 is praise for YHWH. Praise is the acknowledgement and acceptance of YHWH's divine presence and exclusive kingship. Psalm 139 is a description of YHWH's faithfulness by means of relating YHWH's omniscience, omnipresence and omnipotence. This accords with the theme that is refrained throughout Book V: 'for his faithfulness is forever.' Psalm 139 thus becomes an adulation to the exclusivity of YHWH's all-encompassing presence and royal rule. Both the tasks of creating and defending is tied up with the notion of YHWH's kingship in the Hebrew Bible and Psalm 139 underlines both these motifs. First, Psalm 139 illustrates YHWH's sovereignty through YHWH's creation of the psalmist and thus affirms YHWH's exclusive kingship. Based on the intimacy established and the exclusivity of YHWH's kingship acknowledged in verses 1-18, the psalmist petitions to YHWH's guardianship. The psalmist pleads for protection against enemies of YHWH who are consequently also enemies of the psalmist. This

plea to YHWH's guardianship that follows in accord to the realisation of YHWH's supremacy, is a further acknowledgement of YHWH's divine kingship. Psalm 139:1-18 describes YHWH the exclusive King's commitment to the psalmist, whereas Psalm 139:19-22 illustrates the psalmist's acknowledgement and reliance on YHWH as King to protect against evil oppressors.

- An exposition on Book V reveals the framework of the exclusive kingship of YHWH. Within this framework, Psalm 139 maintains a natural flow of thought. The first eighteen verses serve as a salutation to YHWH's exclusive kingship by describing it as omnipresent, omniscient and omnipotent. It is then followed by the psalmist's appeal to YHWH to be of aid against evil oppressors. Verses 19-22 thus serves as a recognition of YHWH's exclusive kingship by appealing to it. With regard to the theology of Book V verses 19-22 does not seem to obscure the meaning of Psalm 139, instead, it adds to the realisation of YHWH's ever-present and exclusive kingship. The uniting theme of YHWH's exclusive kingship may suggest compositional unity, however there is no reconciling the two different tones presented by each part of Psalm 139. Therefore, considering the diverging tones present in Psalm 139 and the abrupt transition from verse 18 to verse 19, it is more likely that Psalm 139 was purposefully edited to display the two different dimensions of YHWH's exclusive kingship, i.e. the realisation of an inescapable divine presence and praise for YHWH as the exclusive King (vs. 1-18) and an appeal to the guardianship of YHWH's exclusive kingship (vv. 19-22). Psalm 139 concludes by summing up both these notions with a petition to be rid of evil and to remain within the bounds of YHWH's sovereign rule (vv. 23-24). This study of Psalm 139 attests to redactional altering within the composition and redactional grouping of Book V of the *Psalter*.

Based on the conclusions reached in this study it is made clear that the verses in question (vv. 19-22) in Psalm 139, attests to the psalmist's suppression under evil oppressors. However, the psalmist's foregoing realisation of an omnipresent, omniscient and omnipotent divine king (vv. 1-18) acts as a counterpoise. The psalmist's plea to the condemnation of evil oppressors is heard and answered in the light of YHWH's all-piercing divine presence and exclusive kingship. The preceding

study of Psalm 139 gives expression to the principle that: Divine presence invalidates evil oppressors.

7.4 Hypothesis

The hypothesis for this study is confirmed as follows:

A holistic analysis conducted by means of a literary-historical method (synchronic) as well as a redactional-critical method (diachronic) reveals a definite structural division in Psalm 139. This structural division bears witness to the redactional altering and positioning of Psalm 139 in between Psalms 138 and 140 linking the foregoing and following sections within the theological framework of Book V of the Psalter. It is within this editorial nature of Psalm 139 that the seemingly out of place plea of verses 19-22 attesting to the condemnation of evil oppressors can be read in coherence with, rather than in contrast with, the peaceful tone of the realisation of divine presence as displayed in verses 1-18 and 23-24. This study reveals that even though verses 19-22 is an editorial aggregation to Psalm 139, it serves to unite and portray the theological discourse of Book V of the Psalter, revealing a clear focus on the universal kingdom and exclusive kingship of YHWH.

7.5 Final remarks

This study has illustrated that although each psalm is a carefully crafted individual piece of poetry, no psalm can be fully comprehended when read in isolation. One of the most significant current discussions in psalm studies is the interrelatedness of psalms. In recent years, there has been an increasing interest in the redactional motive which gave rise to the Hebrew *Psalter*. An inquiry into the relationships that exists between psalms are key to the understanding of a psalm. This study has shown that researching a text must be a holistic exercise that takes into account the textual and contextual elements of the text, as well as the inter-textual relationships of that text. A comprehensive understanding of a psalm must simultaneously consist of a synchronic as well as a diachronic analysis.

The growing interest in psalm studies to investigate the relationships between psalms and to consider the placement of a psalm within the different collections in which it is positioned is reflected in the foregoing study of Psalm 139. Psalm 139 presents scholars with an interpretive challenge of how to make sense of the diverging tones present in the psalm - a challenge that has not been met by form-critical and cult-functional approaches to the psalm. This study proceeded in critically examining the positioning of Psalm 139 within the different collections in which it is situated, i.e. its positioning in between Psalms 138 and 140, in the final davidic *Psalter* (Pss. 138-145) and in Book V of the *Psalter* (Pss. 107-150). Studied from a redactional-critical perspective, the dissonance that occurs in verses 19-22 is made more soluble through viewing it as an editorial alteration to the psalm. This thesis followed to illustrate that verses 19-22 does not deduct from, but adds value to the meaning of Psalm 139 by highlighting the theological discourse in which it is respectively embedded. It has been argued that Psalm 139 conveys a realisation of dependence as well as a plea to the protection of YHWH's exclusive Kingship. Research on Psalm 139 has shown the need to better explore the placement of the psalm to make sense of its fragmented nature and is testimony to purposeful redactional activity in the *Psalter*.

ADDENDUM A

MORPHOLOGICAL ANALYSIS OF PSALM 139

Verse	Hebrew	Morphological analysis and translation
1	לְמַנְצַח	Prep. לְ 'for, of, to' + Def. art. הַ 'the' + Pi. ptc. act. abs. m. s. נָצַח 'supervisor' ; 'for the supervisor'
	לְדָוִד	Prep. לְ 'for, of, to' + Proper noun דָּוִד 'David' ; 'of David'
	מְזִמּוֹר	Noun abs. m. s. מְזִמּוֹר 'psalm' ; 'a psalm'
	יְהוָה	Proper noun יְהוָה 'YHWH' ; 'YHWH'
	חִקְרָתֵנִי	Qal perf. 2 m. s. חָקַר 'to search' + Pns. 1 s. 'me' ; 'you search me'
	וַתֵּדַע:	Waw cons. וַ 'and' + Qal impf. 2 m. s. יָדַע 'to know' ; 'and you know me'
For the supervisor; of David a psalm. YHWH, you search me and you know me.		

2	אַתָּה	Indep. pron. 2 m. s. אַתָּה 'you' ; 'you'
	יָדַעְתָּ	Qal perf. 2 m. s. יָדַע 'to know' ; 'you know'
	שָׁבַתִּי	Qal inf. cstr. יָשַׁב 'to sit' + Pns. 1 s. 'me' ; 'my sit down'
	וְקוּמִי	Waw cop. וַ 'and' + Qal inf. cstr. קוּם 'to arise' + Pns. 1 s. 'me'; 'and my rise up'
	בִּנְתָהּ	Qal perf. 2 m.s. בִּין 'to discern' ; 'you discern'
	לְרַעִי	Prep. לְ 'for, of, to' + Noun cstr. m. s. רַעַי 'intention' + Pns. 1 s. 'me' ; 'for my intention'
	מֵרְחוֹק:	Prep. מִן 'from, out of, by' + Adj. abs. m. s. רְחוֹק 'distant, far'; 'from afar'
You know my sit down and my rise up; you discern my intention from afar.		

3	אָרָחִי	Qal inf. cstr. אָרַח 'to wander' + Pns. 1 s. 'me' ; 'my wandering'
	וּרְבַעִי	Waw cop. וְ 'and' + Qal inf. cstr. רָבַע 'to lie down' + Pns. 1 s. 'me' ; 'and my lying down'
	זָרִיתְ	Pi. perf. 2 m. s. זָרָה 'measure off' ; 'you measure off'
	וְכָל-	Waw cop. וְ 'and' + Noun cstr. m. s. כָּל 'all, each, every' ; 'and all'
	דְּרָכַי	Noun cstr. m. pl. דֶּרֶךְ 'way' + Pns. 1 s. 'me' ; 'my ways'
	הַסִּכְנָתָה:	Hifil perf. 2 m. s. סָכַן 'be familiar with' ; 'you are familiar with'
My wandering and my lying down you measure off; and all my ways you are familiar with.		

4	כִּי	Conj. כִּי 'that, because, for' ; 'for'
	אֵין	Adv. אֵין 'nothing, nought' ; 'nought'
	מִלָּה	Noun abs. f. s. מִלָּה 'a word' ; 'a word'
	בְּלִשׁוֹנִי	Prep. בְּ 'in' + Noun cstr. c. s. לִשׁוֹן 'tongue' + Pns. 1 s. 'me' ; 'in my tongue'
	הֵן	Emph. part. הֵן 'behold!' ; 'behold!'
	יְהוָה	Proper noun יְהוָה 'YHWH' ; 'YHWH'
	יָדַעַתְ	Qal. perf. 2 m. s. יָדַע 'to know' ; 'you know'
	כֻּלָּהּ:	Noun cstr. m. s. כָּל 'all, each, every' + Pns. 3 f. s. 'her' ; 'all of her'
For nought a word is in my tongue, behold! YHWH you know all of her.		

5	אָחוֹר	Noun abs. m. s. אָחוֹר 'behind' ; 'behind'
	וּקְדָם	Waw cop. וְ 'and' + Noun abs. m. s. קְדָם 'in front' ; 'and in front'

	צִרְתָּנִי	Qal perf. 2 m. s. צֹרַר 'shut in' + Pns. 1 s. 'me' ; 'you shut me. in'
	וּתַשֵּׁת	Waw cons. וְ 'and' + Qal impf. 2 m. s. שִׁית 'put, set, lay' ; 'and you have laid me'
	עָלַי	Prep. עַל 'on, above, over' + Pns. 1 s. 'me' ; 'on me'
	כַּפְּכֶּהּ:	Noun cstr. f. s. כַּף 'hand, palm' + Pns. 2 m. s. 'you' ; 'your hand'
Behind and in front you shut me in; and you have laid on me your hand.		

6	(פְּלִיאָה)	Adj. abs. f. s. פְּלִיאָה 'wonderful' ; 'wonderful'
	[פְּלִיאָה]	Adj. abs. f. s. פְּלִיאָה 'wonderful' ; 'wonderful'
	דַּעַת	Noun abs. f. s. דַּעַת 'knowledge' ; 'knowledge'
	מִמֶּנִּי	Prep. מִן 'from, out of, by' + Pns. 1 s. 'me' ; 'from me'
	נִשְׁגָּבָה	Nifal perf. 3 f. s. שָׁגַב 'to be high' ; 'be unattainable'
	לֹא-	Neg. part. לֹא 'no, not' ; 'not'
	אוּכַל	Qal impf. 1 s. יָכַל 'be able' ; 'I am able'
	לָהּ:	Prep. לְ 'for, to, towards' + Pns. 3 f. s. 'her' ; 'to her'
Wonderful is this knowledge for me; unattainable, I am not able to her.		

7	אַיֵּה	Interrog. pro. אַיֵּה 'where' ; 'where?'
	אֵלַי	Qal impf 1 s. הָלַךְ 'to go' ; 'I go'
	מִרוּחְךָ	Prep. מִן 'from, out of, by' + Noun cstr. c. s. רוּחַ 'spirit' + Pns. 2 m. s. 'you' ; 'from your spirit'
	וְאַיֵּה	Waw cop. וְ 'and' + Interrog. pro. אַיֵּה 'where' ; 'and where?'
	מִפְּנֵיךָ	Prep. מִן 'from, out of, by' + Noun cstr. c. pl. פְּנֵה 'face' + Pns. 2 m. s. 'you' ; 'from your face'

	אַבְרָחָה׃	Qal impf. 1 s. בָּרַח 'flee' ; 'I fled'
Where do I go from your spirit; and where from your face I fled?		

8	אִם־	Conj. אִם 'if' ; 'if'
	אֶסַּק	Qal impf 1 s. סָלַק 'climb up' ; 'I climbed up'
	שָׁמַיִם	Noun abs. m. pl. שָׁמַיִם 'heaven' ; "heavens"
	שָׁם	Adv. שָׁם 'there' ; 'there'
	אַתָּה	Indep. pron. 2 m. s. אַתָּה 'you' ; 'you'
	וְאַצִּיעָה	Waw cons. וְ 'and' + Hifil impf. 1 s. יָצַע 'spread out' ; 'and I spread out'
	שְׁאוֹל	Noun abs. m. s. שְׁאוֹל 'sheol' ; 'sheol'
	הִנֵּךְ׃	Emph. part. הִנֵּה 'behold!' + Pns. 2 m. s. 'you' ; 'behold! you'
If I climbed up the heavens there you are; and I spread out in Sheol, behold! you are there!		

9	אֲשֵׁא	Qal impf. 1 s. נָשָׂא 'to raise ; 'I rise up'
	כַּנְפַי־	Noun cstr. f. pl. כַּנְף 'wing' ; 'wings'
	שַׁחַר	Noun cstr. f. pl. שַׁחַר 'dawn' ; 'of the dawn'
	אֲשַׁכְּנָה	Qal impf. 1 s. שָׁכַן 'dwell ; 'I dwelled'
	בְּאַחֲרֵית	Prep. בְּ 'in' + Noun cstr. f. s. אַחֲרֵית 'end' ; 'in the ends of'
	יָם׃	Noun abs. m. s. יָם 'sea' ; 'sea'
I rise up on wings of the dawn; I dwelled in the ends of the sea		

10	גַּם־	Conj. גַּם 'also' ; 'also'
	שָׁם	Adv. שָׁם 'there' ; 'there'
	יָדְךָ	Noun cstr. f. s. יָד 'hand' + Pns. 2 m. s. 'you' ; 'your hand'

	תִּנְחַנֵּי	Hifil impf. 3 f. s. נָחַה 'guide' + Pns. 1 s. 'me' ; 'she guide me'
	וְתִאָּחַזֵּנִי	Waw cons. וְ 'and' + Qal impf. 3 f. s. אָחַז 'to grasp' + Pns 1 s. 'me' ; 'and she grasp me'
	יְמִינֶךָ:	Noun cstr. f. s. יָמִין 'right hand' + Pns. 2 m. s. 'you' ; 'your right hand'
also there you hand she guides me; and she grasps me your right hand.		

11	וְאָמַר	Waw cons. וְ 'and' + Qal impf. 1 s. אָמַר 'to say' ; 'and I said'
	אַךְ-	Adv. אַךְ 'surely' ; 'surely'
	חֹשֶׁךְ	Noun abs. m. s. חֹשֶׁךְ 'darkness' ; 'darkness'
	יְשׁוּפְנֵי	Qal impf. 3 m. s. שָׁף 'cover' + Pns. 1 s. 'me' ; 'he covered me'
	וְלַיְלָה	Waw cop. וְ 'and' + Noun abs. m. s. לַיְלָה 'night' ; 'and the night'
	אוֹר	Noun abs. c. s. אוֹר 'light of day' ; 'light of day'
	בְּעֵרְנִי:	Prep. בְּעַד 'around' + Pns. 1 s. 'me' ; 'around me'
And I said, surely darkness cover me and the night become the light of day around me.		

12	גַּם-	Conj. גַּם 'also' ; 'also'
	חֹשֶׁךְ	Noun abs. m. s. חֹשֶׁךְ 'darkness' ; 'darkness'
	לֹא-	Neg. part. לֹא 'no, not' ; 'not'
	יַחְשִׁיךְ	Hifil impf. 3 m. s. חָשַׁךְ 'make dark' ; 'he becomes dark'
	מִן	Prep. מִן 'from, out of, by' + Pns. 2 m. s. 'you' ; 'for you'
	וְלַיְלָה	Waw cop. וְ 'and' + Noun abs. m. s. לַיְלָה 'night' ; 'and night'

	כַּיּוֹם	Prep. כִּי 'like' + Def. art. הַ 'the' + Noun abs. m. s. יוֹם 'day' ; 'like the day'
	יֵאִיר	Hifil impf. 3 m. s. אֹרֵךְ 'shine' ; 'he shines'
	כְּחֹשֶׁכֶה	Prep. כִּי 'like' + Def. art. הַ 'the' + Noun abs. f. s. חֹשֶׁכֶה 'darkness' ; 'like the darkness'
	כְּאוֹרָהּ:	Prep. כִּי 'like' + Def. art. הַ 'the' + Noun abs. f. s. אוֹרָהּ 'light' ; 'like the light'
Also the darkness does not become dark for you; and the night shines like the day, the darkness shines like the light.		

13	כִּי-	Conj. כִּי 'that, because, for' ; 'because'
	אַתָּה	Indep. pron. 2 m. s. אַתָּה 'you' ; 'you'
	קִנִּיתָ	Qal perf. 2 m. s. קָנָה 'create' ; 'you create'
	כְּלִיָּתִי	Noun cstr. f. pl. כְּלִיָּה 'kidney' + Pns. 1 s. 'me' ; 'my kidneys'
	הִסְכַּנִּי	Qal impf. 2 m. s. סָכַךְ 'weave' + Pns. 1 s. 'me' ; 'you weaved me'
	בְּבֶטֶן	Prep. בַּ 'in' + Noun cstr. f. s. בֶּטֶן 'womb' ; 'in the womb of'
	אִמִּי:	Noun cstr. f. s. אִם 'mother' + Pns. 1 s. 'me' ; 'my mother'
Because you create my kidneys; you weaved me in the womb of my mother.		

14	אוֹדֶךָ	Hifil impf. 1 s. יָדָה 'praise' + Pns. 2 m. s. 'you' ; 'I praise you'
	עַל	Prep. עַל 'on, above, over' ; 'on'
	כִּי	Conj. כִּי 'that, because, for' ; 'because'
	נוֹרְאוֹת	Nifal ptc. act. abs. f. pl. יָרָא 'fear' ; 'fearfully'
	נִפְלִיָּתִי	Nifal perf 1 s. פָּלָא 'distinguish' ; 'I am distinct ;
	נִפְלְאוֹתֵי	Nifal ptc. act. abs. m. pl. 'wonderful' ; 'wonderfully'

	מַעֲשֵׂיךָ	Noun cstr. m. pl. מַעֲשֵׂה 'work' + Pns. 2 m. s. 'you' ; 'your works'
	וְנַפְשִׁי	Waw cop. וְ 'and' + Noun cstr. f. s. נַפֶּשׁ 'soul' + Pns. 1 s. 'me' ; 'and my soul'
	יֹדַעַת	Qal ptc. act. abs. f. s. יָדַע 'to know'; 'knowing'
	מְאֹד:	Adv. מְאֹד 'abundance' ; 'abundance'
I praise you because fearfully I am distinct; wonderfully are your works and my soul knowing this abundance.		

15	לֹא-	Neg. part. לֹא 'no, not' ; 'not'
	נִכְחַד	Nifal perf. 3 m. s. כָּחַד 'hide' ; 'it was hidden'
	עֲצָמָי	Noun cstr. m. s. עֲצָם 'bones' + Pns. 1 s. 'me' ; 'my bones'
	מִמְּךָ	Prep. מִן 'from, out of, by' + Pns. 2 m. s. 'you' ; 'from you'
	אֲשֶׁר-	Relat. part. אֲשֶׁר 'who, which, that, when' ; 'when'
	עָשִׂיתִי	Pual perf. 1 s. עָשָׂה 'to make' ; 'I was made'
	בַּסֶּתֶר	Prep. בַּ 'in' + Def. art. הַ 'the' + Noun abs. m. s. סֶתֶר 'hiding place' ; 'in the hiding place'
	רָקַמְתִּי	Pual perf. 1 s. רָקַם 'to weave' ; 'I was woven'
	בְּתַחְתֵּיּוֹת	Prep. בַּ 'in' + Noun cstr. f. pl. תַּחְתֵּי 'lowest' ; 'in the lowest of'
	אֶרֶץ:	Noun abs. f. s. אֶרֶץ 'earth' ; 'earth'
Not it was hidden my bones from you when I was made in the hiding place, I was woven in the lowest of the earth.		

16	גִּלְמִי	Noun cstr. m. s. גִּלְם 'formless mass' + Pns. 1 s. 'me' ; 'my formless mass'
	רָאָה	Qal perf. 3 f. pl. רָאָה 'to see' ; 'she did see'

	עֵינַיִךְ	Noun cstr. f. dual. עֵין 'eye' + Pns. 2 m. s. 'you' ; 'your eyes'
	וְעַל-	Waw cop. וְ 'and' + Prep. עַל 'on, above, over' ; 'and on'
	סִפְרְךָ	Noun cstr. m. s. סֵפֶר 'book' + Pns. 2 m. s. 'you' ; 'your book'
	כֻּלָּם	Noun cstr. m. s. כָּל 'all, each. every' + Pns. 3 m. pl. 'them' ; 'all of them'
	יִכְתְּבוּ	Nifal impf. 3 m. pl. כָּתַב 'to write' ; 'they were written'
	יָמִים	Noun abs. m. pl. יוֹם 'day' ; 'days'
	יִצְרוּ	Pual perf. 3 m. pl. יָצַר 'to form' ; 'they were formed'
	(וְלֹא)	Waw cop. וְ 'and' + Neg. part. לֹא 'no, not' ; 'and not'
	[וְלוֹ]	Waw cop. וְ 'and' + Prep. לְ 'for, to, towards' + Pns. 3 m. s. 'him' ; 'and to him'
	אֶחָד	Num. abs. m. s. אֶחָד 'one' ; 'one'
	בָּהֶם:	Prep. בְּ 'in' + Pns. 3 m. pl. 'them' ; 'in them'
My formless mass your eyes did see; and in your book all of them were written, the days were formed and not to him one was there.		

17	וְלִי	Waw cop. וְ 'and' + Prep. לְ 'for, to, towards' + Pns. 1 s. 'me' ; 'and for me'
	מֵה-	Interrog. pro. מֵה 'what, how, why? ; 'how?'
	יִקְרְוּ	Qal perf. 3 c. pl. יָקַר 'to be precious' ; 'they are precious'
	רַעְיוֹן	Noun cstr. m. pl. רַעַי 'thoughts + Pns. 2 m. s. 'you' ; 'your thoughts'
	אֵל	Noun abs. m. s. אֵל 'God' ; 'God'
	מֵה	Interrog. pro. מֵה 'what, how, why? ; 'how?'
	עֲצֻמוֹ	Qal perf. 3 m. pl. עָצַם 'to be many' ; 'they are numerous'

	רֵאשִׁיהֶם:	Noun cstr. m. pl. ראש 'total' + Pns. 3 m. pl. 'them' ; 'totalities of them'
And for me, how precious are your thoughts? How numerous the totalities of them?		

18	אֶסְפְּרֵם	Qal impf. 1 s. ספר 'to count' + Pns. 3 m. pl. 'them' ; 'I counted them'
	מִחוּל	Prep. מן 'from, out of, by, more than' + Noun abs. m. s. חול 'sand' ; 'more than sand'
	יִרְבּוּן	Qal impf. m. pl. רבה 'to be many' ; 'they were numerous'
	הִקִּיצְתִּי	Hifil perf. 1 s. קיץ 'to awake' ; 'I awake'
	וְעוֹדִי	Waw cop. ו 'and' + Adv. עוד 'still' + Pns. 1 s. 'me' ; 'and still I'
	עִמָּךְ:	Prep. עם 'with' + Pns. 2 f. s. 'you' ; 'with you'
I counted them they were numerous, more than sand; I awake and still I am with you.		

19	אִם־	Conj. אם 'if' ; 'if'
	תִּקְטַל	Qal impf. 2 m. s. קטל 'kill' ; 'you killed'
	אֱלֹהִים	Noun abs. m. s. אלה 'god' ; 'God'
	רָשָׁע	Adj. abs. m. s. רשע 'wicked' ; 'wicked'
	וְאֲנָשִׁי	Waw cop. ו 'and' + Noun cstr. m. pl. איש 'man' ; 'and men of'
	דָּמִים	Noun abs. m. pl. דם 'blood' ; 'blood'
	סוּרוּ	Qal impf. m. pl. סור 'to turn aside' ; 'turn away!'
	מִנִּי:	Prep. מן 'from, out of, by' + Pns. 1 s. 'me' ; 'from me'
God, if you killed the wicked; and men of blood turn away from me!		

20	אֲשֶׁר	Relat. part. אֲשֶׁר 'who, which, that' ; 'who'
	יֹאמְרֶיךָ	Qal impf. 3 m. pl. אָמַר 'to say' + Pns 2 m. s. 'you' ; 'they speak to you'
	לְמִזְמָה	Prep. לְ 'for, of, to' + Noun abs. f. s. מִזְמָה 'evil plan' ; 'of evil plan'
	נִשְׂאוּ	Qal perf. 3 c. pl. נָשָׂא 'raise' ; 'they raised'
	לְשֵׁם	Prep. לְ 'for, of, to' + Def. art. הַ 'the' + Noun abs. m. s. שֵׁם 'misuse a name' ; 'the misuse of name'
	עֲרִיבֶיךָ:	Noun cstr. m. pl. עָרַב 'adversary' + Pns. 2 m. s. 'you' ; 'your adversaries'
They who speak of an evil plan against you; they raised to misuse your name, your adversaries.		

21	הֲלוֹא-	Interrog. pro. הֲ 'if' + Neg. part. לֹא 'no, not' ; 'if not?'
	מִשְׂנֵאֵיךָ	Pi. ptc. act. cstr. m .pl. שָׂנֵא 'hate' + Pns. 2 m. s. 'you' ; 'your haters'
	יְהוָה!	Proper noun יְהוָה 'YHWH' ; 'YHWH'
	אֲשַׁנֵּא	Qal impf. 1 s. שָׂנֵא 'hate' ; 'I hated'
	וּבַתְּקוּמָיִךָ	Waw cop. וְ 'and' + Prep. בְּ 'in' + Noun cstr. m. pl. תְּקוּמָה 'height' + Pns. 2 m. s. 'you' ; 'and rise up against you'
	אֶתְקוּטְטִי:	Hitpoel impf. 1 s. קוּטַּטַּ 'to feel a loathing' ; 'I loathe'
If not YHWH your haters, I hated; and those who rise up against you, I loathe?		

22	תְּכַלִּית	Noun cstr. f. s. תְּכַלִּית 'extremity' ; 'extremity'
	שִׂנְאָה	Noun abs. f. s. שִׂנְאָה 'hatred' ; 'hatred'
	שִׂנְאֵתָם	Qal perf. 1 s. שָׂנֵא 'hate' + Pns. 3 m. pl. 'them' ; 'I hate them'

	לְאוֹיְבִים	Prep. לְ 'for, of, to' + Qal ptc. act. abs. m. pl. אֵיב 'to be hostile ; 'for enemies'
	הֵיוּ	Qal perf. 3 m. c. הָיָה 'to be' ; 'they are'
	לִּי:	Prep. לְ 'for, of, to' + Pns. 1 s. 'me' ; 'to me'
With extremity of hatred, I hate them for they are enemies to me.		

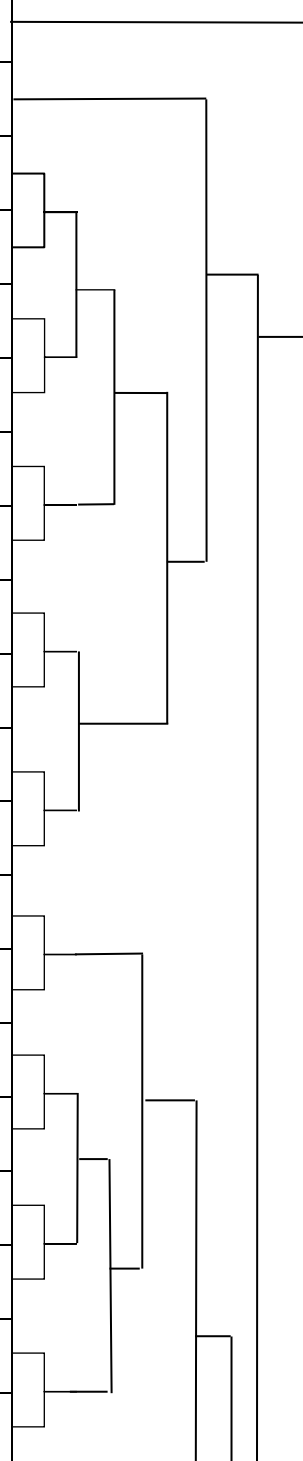
23	חַקְרֵנִי	Qal impt. m. s. חָקַר 'to search' + Pns. 1 s. 'me' ; 'you must search me!'
	אֵל	Noun abs. m. s. אֵל 'God' ; 'God'
	וְדַע	Waw cop. וְ 'and' + Qal impt. m. s. יָדַע 'to know' ; 'and you must know!'
	לְבָבִי	Noun cstr. m. s. לֵב 'heart' + Pns. 1 s. 'me' ; 'my heart'
	בְּחַנִּי	Qal impt. m. s. בָּחַן 'to examine' + Pns. 1 s. 'me' ; 'you must examine me'
	וְדַע	Waw cop. וְ 'and' + Qal impt. m. s. יָדַע 'to know' ; 'and you must know'
	שְׂרָעָפַי:	Noun cstr. m. pl. שְׂרָעָפִים 'disquieting thoughts' + Pns. 1 s. 'me' ; 'my disquieting thoughts'
God, you must search me and you must know my heart! You must examine me and you must know my disquieting thoughts!		

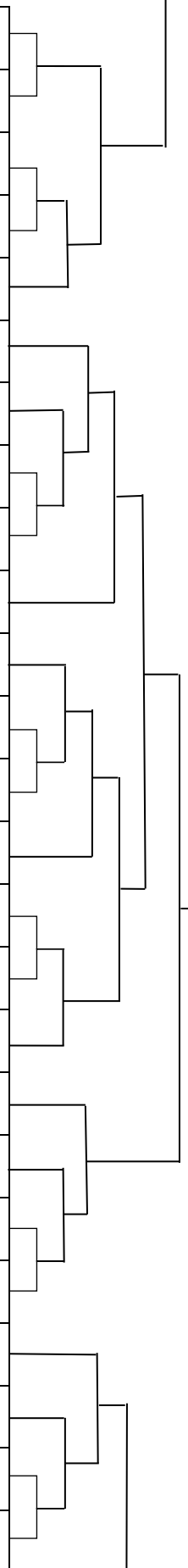
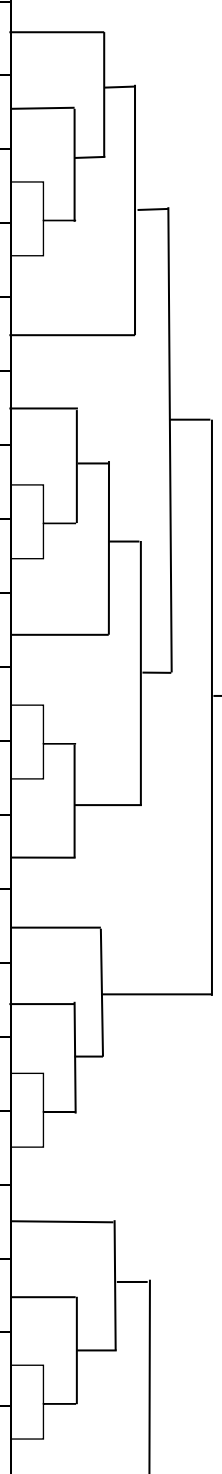
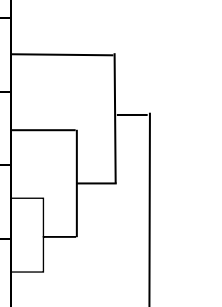
24	וּרְאֵה	Waw cop. וְ 'and' + Qal impt. m. s. רָאָה 'to see' ; 'and you must see!'
	אִם־	Conj. אִם 'if' ; 'if'
	דְּרָכֶיךָ	Noun cstr. c. s. דֶּרֶךְ 'way' ; 'way of'
	עֲצָב	Noun abs. m. s. עֲצָב 'idol' ; 'idol'
	בִּי	Prep. בְּ 'in' + Pns. 1 s. 'me' ; 'in me.'

	וְנִהַנִּי	Waw cop. וְ 'and' + Qal impt. m. s. נִהַה 'to lead' + Pns 1 s. 'me' ; 'and you must lead me'
	בְּדַרְךָ	Prep. בְּ 'in' + Noun cstr. c. s. דַּרְךָ 'way' ; 'in the way'
	עוֹלָם:	Noun abs. m. s. עוֹלָם 'long time' ; 'everlasting'
And you must see if the way of idol is in me, and you must lead me in the way everlasting.		

ADDENDUM B

STRUCTURAL ANALYSIS OF PSALM 139

Stanza	Strophe	Hebrew text	Verse	
HEADING		לְמִנְצַח לְדָוִד מִזְמוֹר	1a	
I	A	יְהוָה חִקְרָתִי וַתִּדְעַ:	b	
		אַתָּה יָדַעְתָּ שִׁבְתִּי וְקוֹמִי	2a	
		בְּנִתָּה לְרַעִי מִרְחֹק:	b	
		אַרְתִּי וּרְבַעִי זִרְיָת	3a	
		וְכָל־דַּרְכֵי הַסִּבְנֹתָהּ:	b	
		כִּי אֵין מִלָּה בְלִשׁוֹנִי	4a	
		הֵן יְהוָה יָדַעְתָּ כְּלָהּ:	b	
	B	אַחֲזֹר וְקָדַם צִרְתָּנִי	5a	
		וַתִּשֵׁת עָלַי כַּפְכָּהּ:	b	
		(פְּלִיאָה) [פְּלִיאָה] דַּעַת מִמֶּנִּי	6a	
נִשְׁגָּבָה לֹא־אוּכַל לָהּ:		b		
II	C	אָנָּה אֱלֹהִים מִרוֹחֶד	7a	
		וְאָנָּה מִפְּנֵיךְ אֲבָרַח:	b	
		אִם־אֶסַּק שָׁמַיִם שָׁם אַתָּה	8a	
		וְאֶצִּיעָה שְׂאוֹל הַנֶּגֶד:	b	
		אִשָּׁא כְנַפֵּי־שָׁחַר	9a	
		אֶשְׁכְּנֶה בְּאַחֲרֵית יָם:	b	
		גַּם־שָׁם יָדֶךָ תִּנְחָנִי	10a	
		וְתִאחַזְנִי יְמִינֶךָ:	b	

	D	וַאֲמַר אֶדְחֹשֶׁף יְשׁוּפְנִי	11a	
		וְלִילָה אֹר בְּעַדְנִי:	b	
		גַּם־חֹשֶׁף לֹא־יִחְשִׁיךְ מִמֶּךָ	12a	
		וְלִילָה כִּיּוֹם יָאִיר	b	
		כְּחֹשֶׁכָה כְּאוֹרָה:	c	
III	E	כִּי־אָתָּה קָנִיתָ כְּלִיתִי	13a	
		תְּסַכְנֵנִי בְּבֶטֶן אִמִּי:	b	
		אֹדְרֶךָ עַל כִּי נִזְרָאוֹת נִפְלִיתִי	14a	
		נִפְלְאִים מַעֲשֵׂיךָ	b	
		וְנִפְשֵׁי יַדְעַת מְאֹד:	c	
	F	לֹא־נִכְחַד עֲצָמֵי מִמֶּךָ	15a	
		אֲשֶׁר־עָשִׂיתִי בַסֶּתֶר	b	
		רָקַמְתִּי בַתְּחִתָּיוֹת אֶרֶץ:	c	
		גָּלְמִי רָאוּ עֵינֶיךָ	16a	
		וְעַל־סִפְרֶךָ כָּלֵם יִכְתְּבוּ	b	
		יָמִים יִצְרוּ	c	
		(וְלֹא) וְנִלַח אֶתְךָ בָּהֶם:	d	
		G	וְלִי מִה־יָקְרוּ רַעֲיֶךָ אֵל	
מִה עֲצָמוֹ רָאשֵׁיהֶם:	b			
אֶסְפְּרֶם מִחֹל יִרְבוֹן	18a			
הֶקִּיצְתִּי וְעוֹדִי עִמָּךְ:	b			
IV	H	אִם־תִּקְטֹל אֱלֹהִים רָשָׁע	19a	
		וְאֲנֹשֵׁי דָמוֹם סוּרוּ מִנִּי:	b	
		אֲשֶׁר יֹאמְרֶךָ לַמְזִמָּה	20a	
		נִשָּׂא לְשׂוֹא עֲרִיד:	b	

	I	הָלוֹא־מִשְׁנֵי־יָדַיְךָ יְהוָה אֲשֵׁנָא	21a	
		וּבְתַקוּמֵי־יָדַיְךָ אֶתְקוּטְטִי:	b	
		תְּכַלִּית שְׁנֵאָה שְׁנֵאתִים	22a	
		לְאוֹיְבִים הָיוּ לִי:	b	
V	J	חֲקַרְנִי אֵל וְדַע לְבָבִי	23a	
		בְּחַנְנִי וְדַע שְׂרַעְפֵּי:	b	
	K	וּרְאָה אִם־דֶּרֶךְ־עֶצֶב בִּי	24a	
		וְנַחְנִי בְּדֶרֶךְ עוֹלָם:	b	

ADDENDUM C

POETIC TECHNIQUES IN PSALM 139

Cola	Vs	Sound	Pattern	Semantics
לְמַנְצַח לְדוֹד מְזִמּוֹר	1a			
יְהוָה חִקְרָתָנִי וַתִּדְעַּ:	b	Ass. a-sound	Repetition ידע in 1b/2a/4b/14c/23a/23b	<i>Inclusio</i> חקר and ידע in 1b/23a <i>Inclusio</i> ידע in 1b/14c/23a/23b
אַתָּה יָדַעְתָּ שְׁבִתִּי וְקוֹמִי	2a	Ass. a-sound	Repetition ידע in 1b/2a/4b/14c/23a/23b Parallelism 2a/2b Chiasmus 2a/3a	Merism שְׁבִתִּי / וְקוֹמִי
בְּנִתְּהָ לְרַעִי מִרְחֹק:	b		Parallelism 2a/2b	
אַרְחִי וּרְבִעִי זָרִית	3a	Ass. i-sound All. r-sound End rhyme זָרִית / הַסְּבִנְתָּהּ	Chiasmus 2a/3a	Merism וּרְבִעִי / אַרְחִי
וְכָל־דַּרְכֵי הַסְּבִנְתָּהּ:	b	Ass. a-sound End rhyme זָרִית / הַסְּבִנְתָּהּ		
כִּי אֵין מְלָה בְלִשׁוֹנִי	4a	Ass. i-sound		
הֵן יְהוָה יָדַעְתָּ כְּלָהּ:	b	Ass. a-sound	Repetition ידע in 1b/2a/4b/14c/23a/23b	
אַחֹר וְקֶדֶם צִרְתָּנִי	5a			Merism אֶחָר / וְקֶדֶם
וַתָּשֶׁת עָלַי כַּפְּכָהּ:	b			

[פְּלִיאָה] דַּעַת מִמְּנֵי (פְּלִיאָה)	6a			
נִשְׁגָּבָה לֹא-אֹכֵל לָהּ:	b			
אָנָּה אֵלֶּךְ מִרִּיחָךְ	7a		Parallelism 7a/7b	
וְאָנָּה מִפְּנֵיךְ אֶבְרַח:	b	Ass. a-sound	Parallelism 7a/7b	
אִם-אֶסֶק שָׁמַיִם שָׁם אַתָּה	8a	Ass. a-sound	Parallelism 8a/8b	Merism 8a/b
וְאַצִּיעָה שְׂאוֹל הַנֶּחֱדָ:	b		Parallelism 8a/8b	Merism 8a/b
אִשָּׁא כְּנָפֵי-שָׁחַר	9a	Ass. a-sound	Parallelism 9a/9b	Metaphor Merism 9a/b
אֲשַׁכְּנָה בְּאַחֲרֵית יָם:	b		Parallelism 9a/9b	Metaphor Merism 9a/b
גַּם-שָׁם יִדְרֶךְ תִּנְחַנִּי	10a		Chiasmus 10a/10b	
וְתִאֲחַזְנֵי יְמִינֶךָ:	b		Chiasmus 10a/10b	
וְאָמַר אֶךְ-חֲשֶׁךְ יִשׁוּפְנֵי	11a	All. g-sound End rhyme בְּעַדְנֵי / יִשׁוּפְנֵי	Repetition 11a/12a/12c	Personification Merism 11a/b Tautology 11a/11b/12a/12b/12c
וְלִילָה אֹרֶךְ בְּעַדְנֵי:	b	End rhyme בְּעַדְנֵי / יִשׁוּפְנֵי	Repetition 11b/12b Parallelism 11b/12a/12b/12c	Merism 11a/b Tautology 11a/11b/12a/12b/12c
גַּם-חֲשֶׁךְ לֹא-יִחְשֶׁדְךָ כֹּמֶךְ	12a	Figura etymologica חֲשֶׁךְ	Repetition 11a/12a/12c Parallelism 11b/12a/12b/12c	Tautology 11a/11b/12a/12b/12c
וְלִילָה כִּיֹּם יֵאִיר	b	Ass. a-sound	Repetition 11b/12b Parallelism 11b/12a/12b/12c	Comparison Tautology 11a/11b/12a/12b/12c Asyndeton
כְּחִשִּׁיכָה כְּאוֹרָה:	c	All. k-sound	Repetition 11a/12a/12c	Comparison

			Parallelism 11b/12a/12b/12c	Tautology 11a/11b/12a/12b/12c
כִּי־אַתָּה קָנִיתָ כְּלִי־תִי	13a	All. t-sound		
תִּסְכְּנִי בְּבִטָּן אֹמִי:	b			
אֲוֹדֶךָ עַל כִּי נִוְרָאוֹת נִפְלִיתִי	14a			
נִפְלְאִים מַעֲשֵׂיךָ	b			
וְנִפְשִׁי יִדְעַת מְאֹד:	c		Repetition ידע in 1b/2a/4b/14c/23a/23b	<i>Inclusio</i> ידע in 1b/14c/23a/23b
לֹא־נִכְחַד עֲצָמִי מִמֶּךָ	15a	All. g-sound	Chiasmus 15a/15b	
אֲשֶׁר־עָשִׂיתִי בַסֶּתֶר	b		Chiasmus 15a/15b	
רָקַמְתִּי בַתְּחִיבוֹת אֶרֶץ:	c			
גָּלְמִי רָאוּ עֵינֶיךָ	16a			
וְעַל־סִפְרֶךָ כָּלֵם יִכְתְּבוּ	b	End rhyme 16b/c יִצְרוּ / יִכְתְּבוּ		
יָמִים יִצְרוּ	c	End rhyme 16b/c יִצְרוּ / יִכְתְּבוּ		
(וְלֹא) וְלוֹן אַחַד בָּהֶם:	d	Inclusive rhyme 16d/17b רָאשֵׁיהֶם / בָּהֶם		
וְלִי מִה־יִקְרְוֵי רַעִיךָ אֵל	17a			
מִה־עֲצָמוֹ רָאשֵׁיהֶם:	b	Inclusive rhyme 16d/17b רָאשֵׁיהֶם / בָּהֶם		
אֶסְפְּרֶם מִתּוֹל יִרְבּוֹן	18a			Hyperbole
הִקִּיצְתִּי וְעוֹדִי עִמָּךְ:	b	Ass. i-sound		

אִם־תִּקְטֹל אֱלֹהִים רָשָׁע	19a	Ass. a-sound		
וְאֲנֹשִׁי דָמוֹם סוּרוּ מִנִּי:	b			
אֲשֶׁר יֹאמְרֶךָ לְמוֹמֵה	20a			
נִשְׂא לְשׂוֹא עָרִיד:	b			
הֲלוֹא־מִשְׁנֵאִיד יְהוָה אֲשַׁנָּא	21a		Repetition שָׁנָא 21a/21b/22a Parallelism 21a/22a	
וּבְתַקוּמֵיךָ אֲתַקוּטֵט:	b		Repetition שָׁנָא 21a/21b/22a Parallelism 21b/22b	
תְּכַלִּית שְׁנֵאָה שְׁנֵאָתִים	22a		Repetition שָׁנָא 21a/21b/22a Parallelism 21a/22a	
לְאוֹיְבִים הָיוּ לִי:	b		Parallelism 21b/22b	
חָקְרָנִי אֵל וְדַע לְבָבִי	23a		Repetition יָדַע in 1b/2a/4b/14c/23a/23b Parallelism 23a/23b	<i>Inclusio</i> חָקַר and יָדַע in 1b/23a <i>Inclusio</i> יָדַע in 1b/14c/23a/23b
בְּחַנְנֵי וְדַע שְׂרַעֲפֵי:	b	Ass. a-sound	Repetition יָדַע in 1b/2a/4b/14c/23a/23b Parallelism 23a/23b	<i>Inclusio</i> יָדַע in 1b/14c/23a/23b
וּרְאָה אִם־דָּרְךָ־עֶצֶב בִּי	24a			
וְנַחֲנִי בְּדָרְךָ עוֹלָם:	b			

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