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Psalm 133

Phase 1: ORAL



Step 1: Listen

Listening to a guide translation and versions of the psalm

Listen well to the poem (notice content, emotions and interesting use of language). There are two guide translations in Appendix A:

1. **Hebrew-mirror** - copied from the Exegetical Layout and adjusted for minimal readability,
2. **Guide translation** - the literal, type 1 corresponding (but more readable) translation, exegetically the same as Hebrew-mirror.

Activity: Read the Hebrew-mirror and the Hebrew tight version in Appendix A. One reader per translation or one reader for all translations (as skills permit). Others to listen with closed books. Consider 'how to listen' – posture? With responses? In silence?



Step 2: Familiarise

Explaining and discussing the meaning and beauty of the psalm

Get an overview of the poem (the big picture) - what's the main message? Who is involved? A poem must be understood as 'a whole' (unlike a story).

FIRST IMPRESSIONS OF THE PSALM

After listening to the guide translations, please respond to any of the following questions:

- What do you like about the psalm?
- What do you find difficult?
- How does the psalm make you feel?
- Which verse do you find particularly important in this psalm?
- What does this psalm teach you about the LORD? What is the LORD like?
- Are there any noticeable repetitions in this psalm?



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ENGAGING WITH THE WHOLE PSALM

Facilitator: address the following topics:

- *The participants in the psalm, the different “speakers” and “audiences”*
 - *The historical background and the context of the psalm, the story behind the psalm, if relevant*
 - *The theme of the psalm*
 - *The flow of the psalm*
 - *The potential big picture obstacles*
 - *Emotion map*
 - *The peak or peaks of the psalm*
 - *The genre and purpose of the psalm*
 - *Highly important poetic device(s) related to understanding the big picture*
 - *How does the psalm point to Christ?*
- What do you think is the main thing the psalmist is trying to say?
 - What type of song or prayer is this psalm? (Praise? Thanksgiving? Wisdom?) Do you have something similar in your language?
 - Who is speaking in this psalm?
 - Who do you think the poet is addressing?
 - Two pictures are used in the middle part of the poem. What are these images? How do they help us understand what the poet wants to say?
 - Notice the first word of the psalm. What is its purpose? How would you do that in your language?
 - What words or ideas are repeated in the psalm?
 - To discover the flow of thought of the psalm, what is the initial statement made in verse 1?
 - How is this statement then explained? Discuss it as a whole group.
 - What is the theme of the psalm? What is the psalm about?

Theme and flow of the psalm

In Zion, where the high priest unifies the people of God, YHWH commands his blessing of eternal life. The eternal blessing includes "how good and how pleasant". The divine blessing in Zion is primary, not the unity of his people. The unity just exemplifies the blessing that YHWH commands. So, from YHWH to blessing Zion, which leads to eternal life, which in turn leads to the goodness and pleasantness of unity. It is life at its fullest (Segal). Don't narrow it down to the family unit. Zion and Aaron, the high priest, are important concepts in this psalm. Basically, they are the key to this psalm, and this is why the poem has been included among the Songs of Ascent.

The oil flowing down also reaches the breastplate, with the 12 stones of each tribe "dwelling together in unity" on it, too. Ex 28:9-12. 17-21. The High Priest was the great unifier. This is a major theme point.



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The descent of the oil and the dew from above is symbolic and thematic in this psalm. YHWH is indeed giving blessings, and the blessings are centered around Zion, the place of congregation during the religious feasts.

The flow of thought starts with an attention grabber, “notice!” that calls attention to something not readily expected. This is stated in the first line: the pleasantness of brothers being together in unity. This unity is then celebrated with two pleasant-sounding illustrations: oil on Aaron's beard and dew on the mountains. The climax is that the place of unity is where the LORD authoritatively sends blessing, and this blessing is eternal life.

- Think about the words Aaron, Hermon, and Zion. What is similar about them? What comes to mind when you think about Aaron? Hermon? Zion?
- What type of psalm is this? How would you describe it? Think of poems in your own language. Do you have something like this celebration in your own language and culture?”

Genre of the psalm

Psalm 133 is a song of Zion, part of the Pilgrims’ Songs, the “Songs of Ascent”. It is the second-last “Psalm of Ascent” (the 15 psalms from Psalm 120 to Psalm 134, which are linked with festivals in Jerusalem). The psalm celebrates the blessing in Zion as seen in the unity of God’s people.

Story behind the psalm

- What is the historical background to this psalm?

The expression ‘when brothers dwell together’ is used in Deut 25:5 to refer to the patrimonial house. This usually included three generations, living in a large, single, multi-roomed house or in a compound of smaller houses built closely together with shared courtyards.

This psalm, however, in the context of the Songs of Ascent, more probably refers to the people of God as God’s family gathering for the annual festivals in Jerusalem, where they are required to travel together and camp together for the duration of the feasts. David experienced this unity between him, the people, and the ark in 2 Samuel 6. The references to Aaron (see Exod 29:7 on Aaron’s anointing) and Zion, and the fact that it is a Song of Ascents, add weight to this interpretation.

Tip for the facilitator: Use pictures of the tabernacle, the temple, the ark of the covenant, Mount Hermon, and the high priestly garment to help the artist-translators understand these concepts behind the psalm.



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Peak of Psalm 133

INSIGHT: The poem is like a staircase, leading up to the highest point of the psalm: Every line (except v.3b) repeats a word or phrase from the previous. This suggests that v.3b is the high point of the poem: In Zion, the LORD commands a blessing of abundant life.

Links between Psalm 133 and other psalms

- There are several common words and ideas that link Psalm 133 to Psalms 132 and 134; for instance, all three focus on Zion and the blessing found in Zion.
- Several Psalms of Ascent include the word אש “there” (eg, Ps 122:4,5; Ps 132:17, and Ps 133:3).

What does this psalm teach us about Christ?

“Mount Zion” for us as New Testament believers today is not a physical place; it is the Church of Christ, partly in heaven, with Him as our head and with the angels and the souls of the deceased believers with him there (Hebrews 12:22-23), and partly on earth, with us as His Church here.

Christ is our High Priest gathering us together in unity, as He intercedes for the Body of Christ, the Church (PHR), especially as He prays for unity in the Church (John 17:22).

We can only have true unity when we are united in the blessing of Christ. It is not something we earn: we make the effort to be united, and therefore the LORD blesses us with eternal life. The LORD blesses, the LORD gives unity when his people worship him. It is not us making the effort to have unity that brings His blessing, but the other way round: He first blesses in Zion, in His Church, and therefore we become one and enjoy eternal life.

UNLOCKING SOME OF THE BIG PICTURE OBSTACLES TO THE PSALM

- The meaning of the initial attention grabber “**Look! Behold! Pay attention!**” can be complicated. Elsewhere in the Old Testament, it is used as a marker of the unexpected. But what is unexpected here? The unity between brothers, or the LORD blessing unity, or the LORD blessing the people when they are in unity, worshipping Him? The main point is not the unity, but the blessing found at Zion; in other words, when the people of God are together in Zion, the LORD blesses them with unity and eternal life.
- The “**brothers**” refer to the whole people of Israel, not just a blood family or a clan by themselves. It can, of course, mean that too, but not exclusively. This is a “song of ascents”, sung when the people of Israel went to the sanctuary in Jerusalem for the annual festivals.
- But why is the **high priestly inauguration** with olive oil a picture of this unity? It seems that the high priest's unifying position highlights the appropriateness of brotherly unity. The high priest was divinely appointed, like the dew in v.3. How both relate to Zion, the



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place of blessing, underscores the blessedness of brotherly life and unity centered on the feasts and the temple. This special unity has a religious sanction, divine approval.

- The **hem, collar, or opening** of the robe of Aaron is not readily apparent. It seems to refer to either the edge of his robe or the collar, making an opening for his head (Motyer). Since the imagery suggests a flowing down of the oil from the beard, how far does it flow down? Only to the collar or to the edge or hem of his robe? The last option seems more likely. The longer-distance imagery sounds more poetic, like the distance of the dew in the next verse.
- Lit. "**Like the dew of Hermon descending/falling on Mt Zion**". Dew of Mt Hermon on Zion is problematic. The thick dew of Zion is LIKE the dew on Mt Hermon, a hidden simile. Heavy dew is the correct interpretation (Briggs, in TH). It is not that the dew of Hermon comes down all the way on Zion. The going down of the dew from the highest mountain in northern Israel (namely, Hermon) all the way to the much lower but still significant mountains of Zion is difficult to understand, but is best translated literally. It is highly poetic and intended to prompt thought. It sounds like a miracle: Mount Hermon's dew falling on Mount Zion (AM).
- The "**there**" of verse 3 can either mean any place where there is unity between siblings, or the place where the pilgrims meet in unity for the annual festivals commanded in Leviticus, wherever the tabernacle was "resting". The preferred interpretation is the last one, where they meet for the sacrifices. Later, by the time of the Songs of Ascent, Jerusalem was the place where the Ark of the Covenant was situated, at first in a tent set up by King David and later in Solomon's Temple.
- The **commanding** of blessing sounds as strange language, but is common in poetry. YHWH speaks, and through His speaking, He creates. The intent is to put something in place through authoritative speaking.

SEGMENTATION OF THE PSALM

Psalm 133 does not have distinct stanzas with particular themes, but, as a short psalm, it has two sections: a frame (v.1 and v.3b) with supporting imagery in the middle (v.2-3a).

The pleasantness of brothers dwelling together in unity in Zion

Image 1: it is like the oil running down the high priest Aaron

Image 2: it is like the thick dew from Mount Hermon coming down on Zion

It is there in Zion where God commands his blessing of unity and life forever

FINAL SUMMING UP

To summarise the Psalm, discuss the following questions:

- What is the main point or message of the psalm?



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A celebration of the blessing of unity that God gives in Zion

- What does this Psalm teach you about the LORD?
The LORD blesses, the LORD gives unity when his people worship him. It is not us making the effort to have unity that brings His blessing, but the other way round: He blesses in Zion, and therefore we become one.
- How can you or your church use this psalm?
This is a beautiful psalm to sing when the church is celebrating its unity. Also at Holy Communion, Psalm 133 will fit well.
- What heading or title would the group suggest for this psalm?
The blessing of unity in Zion



Step 3: Internalise

Absorbing the big picture of the psalm

‘Get the poem inside yourself’ (feel the emotions and be able to recall the main ideas).

Look at the whole psalm so that you can experience it and retell the message. This is not an attempt to memorize the psalm, but to be able to understand the whole message and to express it in the target language. Aim to do at least the first two activities.

CREATIVE RESPONSES

First, do Internalisation Activities 1-5 as a whole group

Internalisation Activity: Listen to Psalm X being read again. Note all the words you hear which speak of God’s power, or which are very intense/extreme language.

Internalisation Activity: Say each line of the psalm in the right order, as a group. Use your own words; there’s no need to have it precisely right. Then let one or two persons say each line of the psalm, again in the right order

Internalisation Activity: Then, as a group, make gestures for each line and again say all the lines in order, but this time with gestures. Use mime/gestures to show the emotion and action.

Internalisation Activity: Lastly, as a whole group, use the popcorn method. Each line, in the right order, is said by a different person. Do this a second time to further reinforce.

Internalisation Activity (optional): The storyboard method: draw pictures of each event in the psalm as they unfold.

Then divide the group into two or three groups



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Internalisation Activity: Skits—act out what’s happening in each of the lines. Make a little drama. Encourage them to use facial expressions, body language, motions, and movement to try to experience the emotions and the sequence of events. This psalm lends itself well to a skit.

Internalisation Activity: Memory song, chant or memory aid to help remember the psalm. Consider making a short poem of the song in the local language or Language of Wider Communication to help you remember the different actions in order. This song is only to help everyone remember each stanza in sequence (and the lines in sequence if it is a short psalm)



Step 4: Explore and compose

Explore the Hebrew and local poetry and compose a song

EXPLORING HEBREW AND LOCAL POETRY

For the facilitator: in this step, address the following topics to explore in Hebrew poetry:

- 1) *Repetition of words, images, and sounds*
- 2) *Handling the Hebrew parallelisms*
- 3) *Figures of speech, like metaphors, personification*
- 4) *Rhythm, verse length, beat*
- 5) *Word order, clause order*
- 6) *Poetic devices that emphasize and mark something as important*

Once the artist-translators have sufficiently internalised and drafted the psalm in the workshop setting, compose a song, poem, rap, chant, or prayer to capture as much of the psalm as possible.

Discuss:

- Think of some metaphors that you might use to describe what unity/harmony is like.

1. Poetic devices- repetitions of words, images, and sounds

Activity: Trace all the words that are repeated. Then all the concepts/images.

- 1) Can you see some interesting poetic devices in the psalm, like repetitions, linkages, images, and illustrations?
- 2) Verses 2-3a are very smooth. What do you think makes them like that?
- 3) The picture language is very detailed. Give some examples from the poem.

Activity: In small groups, discuss:

- a) What is oil like? What is it used for? In what way is oil like unity?
- b) What does dew do? In what way is dew like unity?





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Which pictures will you use in your language?

- 4) The two cola of the frame are held together by phonetic parallelism (see final sounds which are the same).
- 5) The middle section is held together by sound repetitions (Hermon, Zion, Aaron).

The frame is held together with the middle section through repetition (e.g. *good* in v.1 and v.2a), word-play between v.2 and v.3 (בשמן *like oil* and כי שם *indeed there*) and assonance in v.1 and v.3b.

2. Poetic devices - main Images or metaphors of the Psalm

- Metaphors, metonyms, similes, personifications, hyperboles, merisms,

Activity: Can you identify any images, similes or metaphors?

3. Rhythm

Activity: Listen to the psalm again and in groups, and get a feel for the rhythm. Are the lines short or long?

4. Irregular word order

- Fronting of nouns before the verbs in Hebrew is particularly in focus here

Activity: Look at the Flower Garden or the Hebrew-mirror, and identify all the verses that have irregular word order, mostly (in English) nouns put before the verbs.

5. Highlighting poetic devices

Activity: Look at the Flower Garden in Appendix C or the Hebrew-mirror in Appendix A, and identify all the verses that have highlighting devices.

COMPOSING A SONG

For the facilitator: several considerations, like the big question when to start doing the song

- 1) *When to start composing a song? The guide writer and facilitator have some freedom when. Either at the end of step 4, or after step 5. There are pro's and con's to each option. One advantage of doing it in Step 4 (before the detailed exegesis) is that the team starts to think about poetry. They only start to think about poetry once they start composing a song. The risk is that when they compose something early, before step 5, that they settle on a melody they like, but need to change it or even abandon it after getting the more detailed exegetical insights. The advantage*
- 2) *Some other considerations: what about memory aid, the poem or song made at the end of Step 3?*



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- 3) *Another option is to only compose a nice tune and song on one stanza with not any serious exegetical issues. That tune can then be used for the rest of the psalm at the end of Step 5. Experience with shorter sections, like one or two stanzas at a time, to compose.*
- 4) *The team needs to learn some song-writing skills.*
- 5) *It is not necessary to use the same tune for every stanza. Sometimes 3-4 tunes can be used for long psalms.*

Note the poetic devices used in the Hebrew mirror or in the Flower Garden (Appendix C). What is the psalmist trying to achieve? Consider what poetic devices are used in the local language to achieve the same functions.

Activity: NOW, COMPOSE A SONG! Participants are to choose a style or genre that is relevant for the psalm, and to set the whole psalm or sections to a rhythm or music. The song needs to cover all the main stanzas, but doesn't need to be correct in every detail (that comes later in Step 5)

Activity: Make a recording of the composition(s).



Step 5: Draft

Translating stanza-by-stanza

Listen to the poem again. Orally create stanza-by-stanza a first draft of the psalm in the target language, trying to capture the poetic elements and essential details of the meaning. To take full advantage of the oral form, avoid reverting to written Biblical text at this point.

Activity: Divide into smaller groups and let one in each group read through guide translation #2: Hebrew-tight (or play a recording) while others translate. The oral draft can at that point be recorded and/or immediately written down (Step 6 merged with Step 5).

STANZA-SPECIFIC INFORMATION

Often, it speeds the work to have different groups do different stanzas. If you do this, make sure you all hear the psalm from top to bottom, and make suggestions to other groups when you come together...

Stanza 1: Verses 1-3

Song of the ascent. For David

1 Behold, how good and how pleasant
dwelling brothers even together!

Pilgrim song. Of/by David.

1 Listen! How good and pleasant it is
when brothers dwell in unity!



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2 (It is) like the oil the good on the head,
running down on the beard,
 (on) the beard of Aaron,
which is running down on the opening of his
robes!
3 (It is) like the dew of Hermon,
which is coming down on the mountains of
Zion!
For there He has ordered YHWH the blessing,
life until the forever.

2 It is like the precious oil on the head,
running down on the beard,
 on the beard of Aaron,
running down on the edges/hem/collar of his
robes!
3 It is like the dew of Mount Hermon,
which falls on the mountains of Zion!
For there the LORD has commanded the
blessing,
life forevermore.

Discuss:

- Consider carefully how to translate the “Look! Behold! Listen! Pay attention! Wow!”
- The two terms “good” and “pleasant” make it emphatic. Try to maintain two distinct words in your translation.
- The concept of “descending, going down, running down of liquids (oil and water/dew)” is very central to the theme. It is repeated three times. Make sure the same flow is there in the translation.
- The repetition of “beard” is important. Keep the repetition in your translation.
- The exact locative for “there” in v.3 is important to check. Languages vary, and in Bantu languages, for instance, six to nine options can potentially be used.
- Consider how to link the frame and the middle section:

Frame: carries the main message

1. Listen, how good and how pleasant it is when God’s people live in unity!
.....
- 3b. For there the LORD has commanded the blessing, life forevermore.

How are the two parts of the frame connected?

Middle section: adds texture and colour, making the message more memorable

2. It is like the precious oil on the head, running down on the beard,
 on the beard of Aaron, running down on the collar of his robes!
- 3a. It is like the dew of Hermon, which falls on the mountains of Zion!

Links between frame and middle section (giving the poem unity):

- What idea links the middle section to the frame?
- LORD (in the frame) is a term linked to the covenant. What term in the middle section is also linked to the covenant?
- How is blessing (in the frame) represented in the middle section?



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Creative activity: Make a poetic oral translation of these verses and record it.

PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

Activities:

- 1) Listen again to the recordings of each verse or section.
- 2) Think about how to include relevant parts from previous steps and to use ideas from the previous creative activities.
- 3) Put everything together to make a poetic oral representation of the complete psalm, and then record it.

Phase 2: TEXT



Step 6: Transcribe

Make a written draft

Activity: Transcribe the recording/s of the oral draft onto paper or a computer.

Before moving on to the checking steps, check the transcribed draft for the following. This should be done as a whole group, looking at the psalm projected onto a screen or wall. Doing this now will help the exegetical and poetical checks that follow to stay focused on essential matters.

1. **Versification:** put the verse numbers into the psalm.
2. Check that the number of the psalm, and any **superscription**, are in place at the top. (Superscriptions are often left out completely according to team policy, but they are recommended to be put in the written text but not the song.)
3. Put in the **stanza breaks** (blank lines usually).
4. Correct the **punctuation**, in particular finding out where the sentences should end. Different groups use different approaches. Our recommendation is to use capital letters only for the beginning of sentences, not for the beginning of each poetic line.
5. Correct the **spelling**. You may find that there is a lot of discussion over this. The group needs to have consistency but also needs to abide by any government guidelines.
6. Raise any questions you have about the **back translation** at this point. The back translation just needs to be comprehensible; it does not need spell checks etc. You, the facilitator, are the only person who needs it. However, without a good back translation you cannot understand what is going on. As a bonus, at least a couple of exegetical questions you've prepared usually turn out to be unnecessary after this step.
7. Check the **line divisions** (this refers to how the power is broken up into lines and where to make those breaks).



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Step 7: Contents Check

Checking exegetical faithfulness

Check the exegesis of the oral translation. Consider whether the correct meaning has been translated and if the wording used can be improved. The purpose of this step is to check the content of your draft for faithfulness and trustworthiness.

Activity: Review the draft translation in detail, using the oral recording of Step 5 or the transcription of Step 6. Do an exegetical check by comparing the draft with the guide translations given in Appendix A and the exegetical layout in Appendix B and adjust the text as necessary.

EXEGETICAL CHECKLIST

Give special attention to:

- Review the points made in Step 5
- Ensure that the main message comes through clearly from the first and last line. Is it clear that God commands His blessing when people live in unity?
- Check you have the repetitions of “running down” and the similar idea of “falling”.
- In the first line, test your “attention getter”. Is it in the right place?
- Notice the repetition of how in v.1. Can you do something similar to make this line carry emphasis?
- Also good and pleasant is a word pair. Have you found a similar word-pair in your language?
- The final verb of YHWH commanding blessing. Pronounce, send, or give a blessing are easier-to-understand alternatives, but the verb “commanding” has important connotations of authority and finality, which the easier words don’t have. Translate what works, but if the literal form works, by all means use it.
- Look at the notes in the Exegetical Layout, Appendix B



Step 8: Poetry Check

Compare and weigh the poetic features

Check if the Hebrew poetry is all accounted for in the translation through equivalent poetic features in the target language. Consider if the poetry of the translation can be improved, for example, look at the length of lines and the use of rhythm and ideophones.

Activity: Consider the poetic features of your translation. Do they reflect the purpose of the Hebrew poetic features, drawing attention to the correct parts? Experiment a bit with different word-orders and see what sounds the most beautiful, the most poetic.





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POETIC CHECKLIST

Give special attention to:

- The poetry is mainly in the middle section. Make sure it flows smoothly and has a regular rhythm.
- Are you happy with your metaphors? What other picture language could be used to carry the same message? Experiment with different ideas.
- The “there” is very thematic and important in the Hebrew, and is put right in front. How is this focus structure best handled? It needs to mean “there and nowhere else”. It is an exclusive focus.



Step 9: Finalise

Preparing the final version of an authenticated translation

Prepare the final version which will serve as an authorized translation, that in turn will serve as the basis for performing the psalm in the community (audio, visual and written).

Activity: Re-check the spelling of your transcription, the punctuation, in-setting, and the layout of paragraphs to represent stanza segmentation.

Activity: Re-check the essential accuracy of the back translation (not worrying about spelling).

Activity: In AVTT, ensure that the final text of your psalm is uploaded with a back translation, check that the recordings from different steps are in the correct place, and do a final audio recording.

Activity: If possible, copy the final written text into Paratext.



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Phase 3: PERFORMANCE



Step 10: Perform

Performing the psalm in your community

Convert text into performance (dramatic reading/song/chant) to both perform and share this psalm, ensuring the main message comes through in content and style (the same emotional mood as the original poem in the Bible).

You now want to convert your written translation into a performance (song or chant) so that you can share it with your community. You need to make sure that the main message comes through in content and style (the same emotional mood as the original poem in the Bible). The genre - lament or praise or thanksgiving or other - should be similar to songs of the same genre in your culture.

Psalm-specific ideas:

- Psalm 68 is a very long psalm, and making a word-by-word song will not be easy. A suggestion is that the groups that drafted each stanza also sing it.
- The joy and exuberance in this psalm are tangible. Much can be done with this in poetry and song performance.
- Do you want to include spoken poetry or only song? Will instruments or dance be suitable?

Activity: Identify any relevant genres or styles or performance and put the psalm to music. You can put the whole psalm to music, word-for-word, or you can use creative licence to adapt the psalm for the performance.

Activity: Complete a transcript and back translation for the lyrics of any song created by the team to be checked before recording.

FINAL CHECKLIST

In the end of each psalm, there should ideally be four products:

1. Transcription: An authorized, authenticated, or officially written draft in AVTT and Paratext.
2. Dramatic Reading: A recording of a dramatic reading or recitation of the whole psalm, using the authenticated version word-for-word, recorded in AVTT.
3. Whole Psalm Performance: A recording of a performance of the whole psalm, using the entire authenticated version but with freedom to adapt it for authentic performance, including poetic and dramatic features beyond the authenticated version, recorded in AVTT.
4. Song or Hymn: A recording of a performance of part of the psalm including the main idea of the psalm, in the form of a song, hymn or chorus, with or without drama, with freedom to adapt it for authentic performance and to make it easy to sing and remember, recorded in AVTT. An improved version of the Step 4 composition could be used here.





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Appendix A: Guide Translations

Guide Translation #1 (Hebrew-mirror)	Guide Translation #2 (Hebrew-tight)
<p>Song of the ascent. For David</p> <p>1 Behold, how good and how pleasant dwelling brothers even together!</p> <p>2 (It is) like the oil the good on the head, running down on the beard, (on) the beard of Aaron, which is running down on the opening of his robes!</p> <p>3 (It is) like the dew of Hermon, which is coming down on the mountains of Zion!</p> <p>For there he has ordered YHWH the blessing, life until the forever.</p>	<p>Pilgrim song. Of/by David.</p> <p>1 Listen! How good and pleasant it is when brothers dwell in unity!</p> <p>2 It is like the precious oil on the head, running down on the beard, on the beard of Aaron, running down on the edges/hem/collar of his robes!</p> <p>3 It is like the dew of Mount Hermon, which falls on the mountains of Zion!</p> <p>For there the LORD has commanded the blessing, life forevermore.</p>



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Appendix B: Exegetical Layout

Psalm 133 is a pilgrim's psalm.

SUGGESTED HEADING

God's blessing in Zion brings unity

Coding for TAM Verbs and Hebrew features:

- | | | |
|--|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Qatal perfective = blue • Yiqtol imperfective = red | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Infinitive construct = purple • Wayyiqtol waw+imperfective = pink • Jussive/cohortative = light brown | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Imperative = brown • Participle = green • Weqatal = navy |
|--|---|--|

שִׁיר הַמַּעֲלוֹת לְדָוִד	Song of the ascent. For David
הִנֵּה מֵה־טוֹב וּמֵה־נְעִים	1 Behold, ¹ how-good and-how-pleasant ^{2 3}

¹ *Behold* is a call for attention. Together with two exclamations (How . . . !) and two adjectives, it indicates high emotion.

² *Pleasant* and *brothers* rhyme in Hebrew. *Pleasant* can also be translated as *delightful* (AM).

³ Good and pleasant occur together only 4x in the Bible, always connected with YHWH or serving YHWH.





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שֵׁבֶת אֶחָיִם גַּם יַחְדָּ:	dwelling ⁴ brothers ⁵ even ⁶ -together ^{7!8}
כְּשֶׁמֶן הַטּוֹב עַל־הָרֹאשׁ	2 (It is).like.the.oil ⁹ the.good ¹⁰ on-the.head,
יָרַד עַל־הַזָּקֵן זָקֵן־אֶהָרֹן	running down ¹¹ .on-the.beard, (on) the.beard- of Aaron ¹² ,
שֶׁיָרַד עַל־פִּי מְדוּתָיו:	which ¹³ .is.running down ¹⁴ on. the.opening ¹⁵ of.his.robess!

⁴ Heb. *shebet* can mean either stay/dwell or sit. It can mean both, but the idea of being together, even for the feasts, seems prominent.

⁵ *Brothers dwelling* together is used in Deu. 25:5 to refer to patriarchal household of 3 generations. But here it can also refer to unrelated people living in same community, but most likely the people of Israel meeting in Jerusalem for the annual festivals.

⁶ *Even* strengthens the statement, giving greater focus to *together*. *gam 'even'* in unity; means emphatic: they not only dwell together, but dwell together in unity. It could refer to extended family living close together, or family reunions during pilgrim feasts (DK).

⁷ *Brothers in unity* (topic of exclamations) is kept until the end of sentence (marked* word order), for emphasis and to build tension.

⁸ *Behold!*, *how* (x2), *even*, two adjectives, and marked word order point to fact that v.1 is very important (and something to strive for).

⁹ Both *oil* and *dew* are liquid and cannot be divided up. *Oil* can be felt, smelt, seen, tasted, and moves silently (= no sound). *Oil* on the head and beard was for nourishment and refreshment (e.g. Psalm 23:4).

¹⁰ *Good* refers to high-quality oil. Repetition of good links v.2 (middle) with v.1 (frame).

¹¹ Note the repetition of words indicating downward movement (like the blessing from God to people).

¹² *Aaron* is used as he was a well-known figure in Israel (as also *Hermon* and *Zion*). It is not certain if the oil here refers to his anointing as High Priest with the oil of consecration (Motyer), or if it is just the oil of welcoming, as a sign of hospitality. The mention of Aaron as the first high priest responsible for the sacrificial system, makes the first option more likely.

¹³ *Which* could refer to the oil or the beard, but more likely the oil, to keep the some running down liquid imagery with the dew in the next verse.

¹⁴ The relative clause, Heb *sheyyorer* refers to either oil or to beard of Aaron running down.. Some, like HZ, prefer beard of Aaron going down, but it is more likely Special anointing olive oil (TH). The ceremony of the inauguration of Aaron is referred to here (WBC). The unity of the people in their cultic worship is the reason for this imagery. It conveys the idea of soothing but also abundance and delight (Segal), which goes well with the *how good and how pleasant* of v.1

¹⁵ *Opening* seems to refer to either the edge or end of his robe, or the collar making an opening for his head (preferred by AM). Since the imagery suggests a flowing down of the oil from the beard, how far does it flow down? Only to the collar or to the edge or hem of his robe further down? The last option seems more likely. That the longer distance imagery sounds more poetic, like the distance for the dew in the next verse.



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כְּטֶל־חַרְמוֹן	3 (It is)like.the.dew ¹⁶ -of. Hermon ¹⁷ ,
שִׁירָד׳ עַל־הַרְרֵי צִיּוֹן	which.is.coming.down on-the.mountains of. Zion ¹⁸ !
כִּי שֵׁם צְוָה יְהוָה אֶת־הַבְּרָכָה	¹⁹ For ²⁰ there ²¹ he.has.commanded YHWH the.blessing ²² ,
חַיִּים עַד־הָעוֹלָם:	life until-the.forever.

¹⁶ Dew is refreshment that only God can give. It is also more or less regular.

¹⁷ Hermon (highest mountain in Israel) is too far away from Jerusalem for dew to literally pass that way. An impossible image adds to the high rhetoric (exaggeration).

¹⁸ The mountains of Zion are the mountains on which Jerusalem and the Temple were built. It refers to Jerusalem.

¹⁹ Final verse is spread over 3 cola (unlike 2 in other verses). This slowing down of the text gives focus to final declaration in v.3b.

²⁰ For is probably giving emphasis but could also be introducing the reason for why *living in unity is good and pleasant*.

²¹ There could refer to Zion or to *brothers dwelling in unity*. It is best to use *there* in your translation, with a footnote explaining the two possible understandings.

²² "Blessing" is an important Biblical key concept referring to the benefits of the covenant. In the OT it often has material benefits in mind, like offspring, wealth, abundance of food, success, and so on. In the NT the concept of blessing is expanded and predominantly refers to the spiritual (Eph 1:3).



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Appendix C: Flower Garden

The repetitions and patterns below are placed upon the guide translation. Read the commentary at the end of this Appendix which explains insights into these patterns.

Colour Code:

- **Colours** = repetitions of words and associated concepts
- **Bold** = fronting in Hebrew; focus or special topics
- **Borders** = figures of speech, like metaphors and similes
- **[Behold]** = important discourse markers

Psalm 133

1. **[Behold]**, **how good** and **how pleasant**
brothers dwelling even together!
 2. It is like the **good** oil on the head,
running down **on the beard**,
on **the beard** of Aaron,
which is **running down** on the edges of his robes!
 3. It is like the dew of Hermon,
which is **coming down** on the mountains of Zion!
- [For] there** the LORD has commanded the blessing,
life until forever.

