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# Psalm 33

## 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?

**Preparative activity 1:** Discuss as a group how do you in your culture, traditionally, praise the supreme being. Also discuss if these praises are said or sung, and if they can be accompanied by musical instruments and dancing and clapping. And of course, who is allowed to do it.

**Preparative activity 2:** Discuss in small groups the benefits of praise. Why is praising good? How can it be good for God? And how can praising be good for humans.

**Preparative activity 3:** Read Genesis 1:1-10 together as a group and discuss how God has created the heavens and the earth.



### 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).



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## 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?

## 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?*

**Discuss:**

- Participants externally  
One single psalmist is speaking to the “*righteous ones*”, an Israelite audience. The psalmist could be a prophet or priest (Segal), we just don’t know. It may even be the king. The Greek tradition (LXX) attributes this Psalm to David, but this is not present in the Hebrew. There is a group response in vv.20-22 “us, our” (Segal), maybe the very same “*righteous ones*”.
- Participants and places referred to inside the psalm

**Activity:** as a group or in small groups, try to identify all the different participants and players, animate and inanimate, in the psalm itself.

These are:

- The righteous ones, his people, the nation of Israel
- The LORD
- The nations; all the inhabitants of the world, including Israel but the focus is on the nations beyond
- Fighting men: kings and warriors

**Activity:** as a group or in small groups, try to identify all the different places referred to in the psalm.

These are:

- The sky, the heavens



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- Heaven as the dwelling place of God
- All the earth, the whole world
- Discuss the first line
  - Listen to the first line of the psalm again. What does this line say about the psalm and what it is about? It is the righteous ones summoned to praise the LORD.
- Discuss the concluding line
  - Next, listen to the last line of the psalm concluding the praise. What is that about?
- What did the psalmist actually say? What is this psalm about?

### Theme and Flow of the Psalm

Psalm 33 begins where Psalm 32 left off (PHB): it summons the righteous to sing and praise the LORD. The 13 references to YHWH points to the God-centeredness of this praise psalm.

There seems to be no central thematic thread and no returning to a central thread, but his HESED “his covenant commitment, loyal love” is the all-enclosing theme word in Psalm 33 (Segal). The THEME of the psalm is a celebration of the LORD’s Word and his covenant love for his people.

The FLOW of the psalm is suggested to be the following: it starts with offering of praise and ends with a petition which is a declaration of trust (DK). The main body of verses 4-19 contains God’s virtues in descending order from call to praise to creation, to history, to Israel, to the individual (Segal).

The first three verses is a summons for the righteous to praise the LORD with beautiful music. The reasons for that are then given in the next four stanzas, celebrating God speaking: first, his Word reveals his Name and his covenant loyalty, then the amazing fact that he creates through his word, followed by two stanzas on the nations owing him respect for his spoken word, and fourthly, that his spoken plans and counsels will last forever in contrast to the plans of the nations.

Then there is a turn, a crying out how blessed Israel is to have YHWH as their God and they are his permanent possession. This is the central stanza of the psalm, right in the middle.

The flow of thought then turns to the LORD watching, to him seeing things, and two things he sees: first, he is watching the nations, and he is watching the ones who are really victorious, the ones who fear him and hope in him, namely the very righteous ones who were summoned to praise in verse 1.

The psalm ends with a collective response to the main section of praise, taking the praise theme further by expressing their joy and hope in this wonderful, powerful, over-all ruling, and watching God. The psalm concludes with a final petition that his covenant commitment and loyal love continue to be manifest to his people. It is a petition but in fact not really a petition because the issue is already guaranteed in his covenant but is a confirmation of trust (DK).

- Discuss the peak and other high points of the psalm.



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**Activity:** What in the psalm attracts particular attention? Is there some climactic point or not? Are there any particular lines that really jolt you and touch you? Discuss it in the full group or in pairs.

Like many psalms, Psalm 33 is not an exception that the opening line, the closing line, and the central verse contain vital thematic information. Do look at that again.

But the wonder of v.5b, "*whole earth is full of his HESED (his covenant commitment, loyal love)*" stands out. Compare that with Isaiah 6:3 where it is stated that the whole earth is full of his glory. HESED is more than glory. But in a way, God's HESED *is* his glory, according to Exodus 34 where HESED features prominently when his glorious name is called out before Moses. The wonder of his HESED is more than the wonder of his glory, hence the final cry for his HESED to continue (in vv.18 and 22, where HESED reappears) (MW).

### Genre and Significance of the Psalm

Psalm 33 is a psalm of praise, a hymn of praise (Segal, Gunkel), with a collective petition in the last line for his loyal love to continue to be manifest over his people.

#### Discuss

- What triggered the psalmist to compose it? Why did he want to say what he said in the psalm? What motivated him to say it?  
We do not really know, other than that that the psalmist was overflowing with a sense of wonder.
- What did the poet want to achieve? Or hope to achieve for himself or for his audience?  
The best we can say is that the psalmist wanted to celebrate the Name of the LORD, and especially his loyal love to his righteous ones. He, the one who created everything and watches over all the nations, is the one who loves them with his full covenant commitment. The righteous ones are indeed blessed, is what he wanted to say.

### Historical Setting of the Psalm

The setting is choral, the form of address is collective, and the perspective is both global and national (Segal). The reference to the music in v.2 points to a public performance of the psalm.

It is also not clear if the psalm is pre-exilic or post-exilic. If Psalm 33 is indeed a continuation of Psalm 32, as has been suggested, then it is probably a psalm of David and pre-exilic. But this is not conclusive.

It is not easy to discern a story behind the psalm, an event or a situation which may have given rise to this psalm.

### SEGMENTATION OF THE PSALM

Verses 1-3: Call to sing and praise with music



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Verses 4-5: The Word of the LORD and his Name

Verses 6-7: The Word of the LORD in creation

Verses 8-9: Let the nations be in awe because he spoke

Verses 10-11: The counsel of the LORD stands forever

Verse 12: Peak – Blessed is the people whose God is the LORD

Verses 13-15: The LORD's eyes are on the nations

Verses 16-19: The LORD's eyes are on those who fear him

Verses 20-22: Response: we are waiting on you and rejoicing

## FINAL SUMMING UP

To summarise the Psalm, discuss the following questions:

- In summary, what is the main point/message of the psalm?  
*YHWH, the LORD, is to be praised by his people because of his faithful covenant love to them, because of the power of his revealing and creating word, and because of his comprehensive power over the nations of the world.*
- What does this Psalm teach you about the LORD?  
*This psalm contains majestic themes about the glory of the LORD. He is praiseworthy, his name (character, reputation) is the reason for praise, his word is powerful and creating, his covenant loyalty is universally pervasive, he observes the nations, he makes their plans come to nothing.*  
*The wealth of moral terms mean that God is more than a mere maker (DK). He wants to be in relationship, but in a righteous and holy and committed relationship.*
- How could your church (or you) use this psalm?  
*The NT gives capital letters to Word and Breath (Spirit) in Gen 1:2-3 (MW). Our LORD is the Lord of creation.*  
*How would Jesus sing it as the Messiah and the eternal Son of God?*  
*In terms of details, the final deliverance from death in v.19 is gloriously fulfilled in Christ, 2 Tim 1:10 (MW).*
- What heading or title would the group suggest for this psalm?  
*"Blessed are the righteous ones" (based on the central peak stanza, v.12), "The LORD's loyal love is everywhere" (based on the thematic and central key term HESED), "praise the LORD with music" (based on verses 1-3)*





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## 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 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

**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)

When done, perform it to the rest of the group.

Other Options

**Internalisation Activity 8: The key word method:** give a key word or a macroword, or maybe a short phrase, for each verse line or each parallelism. Then try to recite all the key words in order.





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Do it as a group first, each one calling out what they remember. Then let one or two people recite the list, in order.

**Internalisation Activity 9: The tabletop method:** go outside and with anything available, try to reconstruct the city of Jerusalem and the mountains around it. Also have something that represents the palace where the king rules from. Then recall the events of the psalm by pointing to the different representations, like the evil king ruling from the palace in v.3.



## 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.

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

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

#### 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



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**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?*
- 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).



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## Step 5: Draft

Translating section-by-section, 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 to make suggestions to other groups when you come together...

#### Stanza 1: Verse 1-3

1 Sing for joy, righteous ones, to the LORD,  
**for the upright ones**, praise is befitting.  
2 Acclaim the LORD with a lyre,  
**with a harp with ten strings** make  
music to him.  
3 Sing to him a new song,  
play skillfully with shouts.

1 Sing for joy, righteous ones, to the LORD,  
praise is fitting for the upright.  
2 Acclaim the LORD with a lyre,  
with the harp with ten strings, make  
music to him.  
3 Sing to him a new song,  
play skillfully with shouts.

#### Discuss:

- “sing for joy” means shout with joy (ranan), exuberant praise (AM), and sing aloud, loud shouts of homage (DK). It is a call for freshness, skill and fervour. Chant joyfully (Segal). In some contexts, consider “ululate” for this onomatopoeic word.
- Be careful to maintain the pair of “righteous/upright”. “Righteous” means fit for the world as God wants it to be, the way he created it to be. “Upright” means morally straight, level, and sincere. Languages map these types of things in different ways, so it may be that there is no equivalent pair in your language. Chose the closest equivalent.
- A “lyre” is a small stringed instrument held in one’s hands.
- A “harp” is triangular musical instrument with different amounts of strings. The “ten-stringed harp” is particularly sonorous and is used here to emphasize the greatness of the music that is required.
- “A new song” means a fresh song, a song that is all excited again. It is usually linked to new celebrating new and fresh movements of God’s redemptive activity, though that is not explicit in this Psalm.

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





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### Stanza 2: Verses 4-5

4 For the word of the LORD is **upright**,  
and all his work is trustworthy.  
5 He loves righteousness and justice,  
**the loyal love of the LORD** has filled  
the earth.

4 For the LORD's word is upright,  
and all his work is trustworthy.  
5 He loves righteousness and justice,  
The LORD's loyal love has filled the  
earth.

#### Discuss:

- Nothing came into existence but by God's command, freely, no necessity.
- These two verses contain a string of important ethical-religious terms: *upright, trustworthy, righteousness, justice, and covenant loyalty/loyal love*, repeated 5 times. Normally these terms need to be translated consistently with what has been done elsewhere. And normally, the renderings for these terms are determined by church leaders. Follow those and be careful not to use terms not used before, unless you found term that really speaks to the meaning here.
- The term HESED "loyal love" is particularly important in this psalm, as we have seen in Step 2. Consider your choice of term or phrase carefully.
- How can "loyal love fill the earth"? Discuss what it means in your language and culture.

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

### Stanza 3: Verses 6-7

6 By the word of the LORD the heavens have  
been made,  
and by the breath of his mouth all their  
host.  
7 He gathers the waters of the sea like the  
heap,  
putting the deeps in storehouses.

6 By the LORD's word the heavens have been  
made,  
and all their stars by the breath of his  
mouth.  
7 He gathers the waters of the sea like a heap,  
putting the deep in storehouses.

#### Discuss:

- v.6, by speaking the LORD created.
- "all their host": hosts is plural and refers to a huge amount of people, or soldiers, of angels, and of stars. Here it refers to a huge number of stars in the heavens.
- "gathering like a heap the waters of the sea" sounds strange but poetically refers to Day 3 of creation in Genesis 1, when the LORD separated sea and dry land. Try to keep the somewhat strange metaphor in your language, but if that doesn't work, try a different way to express this strange expression. Do not just blandly translate that the LORD divided the sea and the dry land. It is an opportunity to use poetic imagery.
- Notice the word pair "waters of the sea/deep" in v.7. "Deep" is another word for the sea that has connotations of the primordial waters. Translating it literally in your language may sound strange or have no meaning, and finding a close equivalent may be difficult, but do try.



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

#### Stanza 4: Verses 8-9

8 Let all the earth fear the LORD,  
of him let them dread, all the  
inhabitants of the world.  
9 For He, he spoke and it came to be,  
He, he commanded and it stood firm.

8 Let all the earth fear the LORD,  
Let all the inhabitants of the world  
stand in awe of him.  
9 For it was he who spoke and it came to be.  
It was he who commanded, and it  
stood firm.

#### Discuss:

- “the fear of the LORD” is a key Biblical phrase and should be translated consistently and in agreement with the decision of church leaders. “*Stand in awe*” basically means the same thing, but it is an English idiom that cannot easily be translated literally. It does not mean a literal standing, but a posture of awe.
- The “*for*” in v.9 means “because”. It provides a reason why all the nations should fear the LORD. It is important to translate it.
- In v.9 is a left dislocation construction: “*For he, he spoke...*” Languages handle this differently. Think of a nice poetic way to bring this out. In English, the emphasis of “*It was he who spoke...*” works well.
- Notice the pairs “*all the earth/all who are dwelling in the world*” and “*earth/world*”.
- Notice the beautiful pattern of intensification in v.9. commanding is stronger than only speaking, and stood firm is stronger than coming to be.

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

#### Stanza 5: Verses 10-11

10 The LORD has brought to nothing the  
counsel of nations,  
He has frustrated plans of peoples.  
11 The counsel of the LORD stands forever,  
the plans in his heart to generation  
after generation.

10 The LORD has brought the nations’ counsel  
to nothing,  
he has frustrated the peoples’ plans.  
11 The counsel of the LORD forever stands,  
the plans in his heart to generation  
after generation.

#### Discuss:

- In v.10, the verb “*brought to nothing*” means to neutralise (break), disempower, taking away any effectiveness. There is another pair here: “*brought to nothing/frustrate*”. Frustrate means to thwart, to hinder to succeed, to stand in the way.
- The phrase pair “*counsel of nations/plans of peoples*” will not be easy to translate. There are two word pairs here, both “*counsel/plans*” and “*nations/peoples*”. Your language may or may not make such distinctions.



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- Notice the chiasmic poetic structure: ABB'A'. Maintain it in the translation.
- “plans of his heart” has to do with his inner intentions.
- “*generation after generation*” in v.11 means all successive generations.

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

### Stanza 6: Verses 12

12 Blessed is the nation for whom the LORD is their God,  
the people he chose as an inheritance for himself.

12 Blessed is the nation who have the LORD as their God,  
the people he chose as an inheritance for himself.

#### Discuss:

- This verse is the central peak of the psalm and should be a separate stanza. Here the contrastive theme of the “*counsels of nations*” (v.10) coming to nothing versus the everlasting election of one nation (DK).
- The term “*blessed*” is a key term and should be translated in the way specified by church leaders and consistently with other Psalms. It is neither a verb nor an adjective in Hebrew, so there are no good English equivalents. It is an exclamation indicating that one is favored by the LORD in such a way that a people or an individual has abundance of good things, physical but especially spiritual.
- Note the word pair “*nation/people*”. It may be that your language does not have two different words for this but explore other possibilities.

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

### Stanza 7: Verses 13-15

13 From heaven the LORD looked down,  
he saw all the children of humankind.  
14 From his dwelling place he gazed  
on all the inhabitants of the earth.  
15 The one fashioning together their hearts  
is the one considering all their works.

13 From heaven the LORD looked down,  
he saw all the children of humankind.  
14 From his dwelling place he gazed  
on all the inhabitants of the earth.  
15 He is the one who fashions together their hearts,  
the one who considers all their works.

#### Discuss:



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- In vv.13-15 notice the three time repetition of “all” and then the Hebrew word YACHAR which means “together” (v.15a). Make sure to translate all three occurrences of “all”. This is important because it stresses the contrast to the narrow basis of human judgements (DK).
- The meaning of “heaven” here is different to v6. Here it refers to God’s “dwelling place” of v.14a. But notice that God is not altogether separated from his creation, he can still observe the inhabitants of the earth.
- Note the three different words for observation in these verses: “looked down/saw/gazed”. There seems to be a pattern of intensification here, from initially glancing and observing, to a more focussed seeing to an enduring, penetrating gazing. To reproduce this in translation is no small matter. Languages differ and may not make the same distinctions. But maybe your language does. Experiment with what your language offers.

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

### Stanza 8: Verses 16-19

16 There is no king saved by the greatness of his army,  
a warrior will not be delivered by the greatness of his strength,  
17 the horse is a false hope for victory,  
and **by its great power** it will not rescue.  
18 Look! The eyes of the LORD are on those fearing him  
on those hoping in his loyal love,  
19 to deliver their lives from death  
and to keep them alive in famine.

16 No king is saved by the greatness of his army,  
nor is a warrior delivered by the greatness of his strength,  
17 the horse is a false hope for victory,  
and by its great power it does not save.  
18 But consider! The LORD’s eyes are on those who fear him,  
on those who hope in his loyal love,  
19 to deliver their lives from death  
and to keep them alive in famine.

#### Discuss:

- Notice the 3 times “many” occurs, along with the repetition of “greatness.” This is in contrast with the real greatness of verses 18-19. Be sure to maintain this in translation.
- “Look!”, in verse 18 is not an imperative in Hebrew. It is the word that, in older translations, was translated “behold.” It calls the reader’s attention to something unexpected, emphasizing the contrast.
- v.18 “hoping in his loyal love”. Hope means to emotionally expect something, have faith in terms of real expectation. It does not mean that we have not yet received the covenant love. We have.
- In v.19, the construction “to deliver” and “to keep” refer to constant states (AM).

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

### Stanza 9: Verses 20-22

20 **We** have been waiting on the LORD,  
he is **our help and our shield**,  
21 for **in him** our heart will rejoice,

20 We have for the LORD,  
he is our help and our shield,  
21 for in him our heart rejoices,



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because **in his holy name** we have been trusted.

22 Let your loyal love, LORD, be upon us even as we have hoped in you.

because we have trusted in his holy name.

22 Let your loyal love, O LORD, be upon us, even as we have hoped in you.

#### Discuss:

- The meaning of “*waiting on the LORD*” is surrendering in faith to Him, waiting for him step by step, not following one’s own ideas or desires.
- The Hebrew word “*soul*” has been omitted in translation of v20 because it would be misleading. It does mean my unseen being, but my whole being, body and spirit, physical and spiritual. Note that the same word occurred in the previous verse.
- Fronting of “*our help and our shield he is*” is marked, emphatic, eye-catching language.
- How does one’s heart rejoice? This is a Hebrew idiomatic expression.
- What does it mean to “*trust in his holy name*”? Discuss how one can trust in a name. Again this is a Hebrew idiomatic expression.
- How can his HESED, his loyal love be “*upon us*”? It has the idea of resting on us, remaining on us. How would you express that in your language?
- The “*even if*” of v.22 means simultaneous action. As we have been hoping on you, let your love be upon us.
- Consider how to translate the jussive verb in v.22: “**let** your loyal love **be** upon us”

**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

Writing it down

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





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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).



## 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:

- Go through all the notes again for each stanza in Step 5 and make sure everything has been covered.
- Ensure you have the repetitions which appear in the text (note the colours).





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## Step 8: Poetry Check

Comparing and weighing 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.

### POETIC CHECKLIST

Give special attention to:

- Check if you maintained the metaphors as far as possible.
- Check for poetic rhythm. Check if the verse lines are not too long with too many syllables and accents. Use enjambment where the sentences are required to overrun the syllable limits.
- There is one vocative, in v.22 “*The LORD*”. Consider the best position in the verse, in line with local word-order and phrase-order discourse preferences.
- Always keep the lines as compact and short as possible.



## 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:**

- ...

**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

Hebrew-mirror	Guide Translation
<p>1 Sing for joy, righteous ones, to the LORD, <b>for the upright ones</b>, praise is befitting.</p> <p>2 Acclaim the LORD with a lyre, <b>with a harp with ten strings</b> make music to him.</p> <p>3 Sing to him a new song, play skilfully with shouts.</p> <p>4 For the word of the LORD is <b>upright</b>, and all his work is trustworthy.</p> <p>5 He loves righteousness and justice, <b>the loyal love of the LORD</b> has filled the earth.</p> <p>6 By the word of the LORD the heavens have been made, and by the breath of his mouth all their host.</p> <p>7 He gathers the waters of the sea like the heap, putting the deeps in storehouses.</p> <p>8 Let all the earth fear the LORD, <b>of him</b> let them dread, all the inhabitants of the world.</p> <p>9 For <b>He</b>, he spoke and it came to be, <b>He</b>, he commanded and it stood firm.</p> <p>10 The <b>LORD</b> has brought to nothing the counsel of nations, He has frustrated plans of peoples.</p> <p>11 <b>The counsel of the LORD</b> stands <b>forever</b>, the plans in his heart to generation after generation.</p> <p>12 Blessed is the nation for whom the LORD is their God, <b>the people</b> he chose as an inheritance for himself.</p> <p>13 <b>From heaven</b> the LORD looked down,</p>	<p>1 Sing for joy, righteous ones, to the LORD, praise is fitting for the upright.</p> <p>2 Acclaim the LORD with a lyre, with the harp with ten strings, make music to him.</p> <p>3 Sing to him a new song, play skillfully with shouts.</p> <p>4 For the LORD's word is upright, and all his work is trustworthy.</p> <p>5 He loves righteousness and justice, The LORD's loyal love has filled the earth.</p> <p>6 By the LORD's word the heavens have been made, and all their stars by the breath of his mouth.</p> <p>7 He gathers the waters of the sea like a heap, putting the deep in storehouses.</p> <p>8 Let all the earth fear the LORD, Let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of him.</p> <p>9 For it was he who spoke and it came to be. It was he who commanded, and it stood firm.</p> <p>10 The <b>LORD</b> has brought the nations' counsel to nothing, he has frustrated the peoples' plans.</p> <p>11 The counsel of the LORD forever stands, the plans in his heart to generation after generation.</p> <p>12 Blessed is the nation who have the LORD as their God, the people he chose as an inheritance for himself.</p> <p>13 From heaven the LORD looked down,</p>



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he saw all the children of humankind.  
**14 From his dwelling place** he gazed  
 on all the inhabitants of the earth.  
**15** The one fashioning together their hearts  
 is the one considering all their works.

**16** There is no king saved by the greatness of  
 his army,  
 a warrior will not be delivered by the  
 greatness of his strength,  
**17** the horse is a false hope for victory,  
 and **by its great power** it will not  
 rescue.  
**18** Look! The eyes of the LORD are on those  
 fearing him  
 on those hoping in his loyal love,  
**19** to deliver their lives from death  
 and to keep them alive in famine.

**20** **We** have been waiting on the LORD,  
 he is **our help and our shield**,  
**21** for **in him** our heart will rejoice,  
 because **in his holy name** we have  
 been trusted.  
**22** Let your loyal love, LORD, be upon us  
 even as we have hoped in you.

he saw all the children of humankind.  
**14** From his dwelling place he gazed  
 on all the inhabitants of the earth.  
**15** He is the one who fashions together their  
 hearts,  
 the one who considers all their works.

**16** No king is saved by the greatness of his  
 army,  
 nor is a warrior delivered by the  
 greatness of his strength,  
**17** the horse is a false hope for victory,  
 and by its great power it does not save.  
**18** But consider! The LORD's eyes are on those  
 who fear him,  
 on those who hope in his loyal love,  
**19** to deliver their lives from death  
 and to keep them alive in famine.

**20** We have for the LORD,  
 he is our help and our shield,  
**21** for in him our heart rejoices,  
 because we have trusted in his holy  
 name.  
**22** Let your loyal love, O LORD, be upon us,  
 even as we have hoped in you.



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## Appendix B: Exegetical Layout

The genre of Psalm 33 is a psalm of praise

### SUGGESTED HEADING

The king (or David) celebrating the presence of the LORD.

#### Coding for TAM Verbs and Hebrew features:

- Qatal perfective = blue
- Yiqtol imperfective = red
- Infinitive construct = purple
- Wayyiqtol waw+imperfective = pink
- Jussive/cohortative = light brown
- Imperative = brown
- Participle = green
- Weqatal = navy

רָנְנוּ צְדִיקִים בַּיהוָה	1 Sing.for.joy <sup>1</sup> righteous.ones in.YHWH
לְיִשְׂרָאֵל נְאֻמָּה תְהִלָּה:	<b>for.the.upright.ones<sup>2</sup></b> befitting (is) praise.
הוֹדוּ לַיהוָה בְּכִנּוֹר	2 Acclaim <sup>3</sup> YHWH with.a.lyre,
בְּנִבְלַת עֲשׂוֹר וּמְרוֹלוֹ:	<b>with.a.harp.of ten.(strings)</b> make.music-to.him.
שִׁירוּ-לוֹ שִׁיר חֲדָשׁ	3 Sing-to.him a.song new <sup>4</sup> ,
הִיטִיבוּ נַגֵּן בְּתִרְעָה:	make.skillful to.play <sup>5</sup> with.shouts <sup>6</sup> .

<sup>1</sup> Shout with joy (ranan), exuberant praise (AM). Sing aloud, loud shouts of homage (DK). Call for freshness, skill and fervour. Chant joyfully (Segal). In some contexts consider “ululate” for this onomatopoeic word.

<sup>2</sup> Note the pairing of righteous with upright. Righteous speaks to God’s intended ordering of his creation. Upright is a moral word to do with rectitude.

<sup>3</sup> Many translations use “praise” here, but it is good to keep הלל distinct. This word connotes causing people to know something.

<sup>4</sup> New song: 4x in psalter, 1x in Isaiah, refers to celebrating a new movement of God’s redemptive activity. See also Rev 7, 14:1-3 (PHR).

<sup>5</sup> Play here in the sense of playing an instrument, not in the sense of children with toys.

<sup>6</sup> War cry (Joshua 6:2), religious shouting (2 Sam 6:15).





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כִּי־יֵשֶׁר דְּבַר־יְהוָה	4 For <b>upright</b> (is) the word of YHWH,
וְכָל־מַעֲשָׂהוּ בְּאֱמוּנָה:	and all his work (is) in trustworthiness <sup>7</sup> .
אֱהָב צְדָקָה וּמִשְׁפָּט	5 Loving righteousness <sup>8</sup> and justice,
חֶסֶד יְהוָה מְלֵאָה הָאָרֶץ:	<b>the loyal love of</b> <sup>9</sup> YHWH has filled the earth.
בְּדַבַּר יְהוָה שָׁמַיִם נִעֲשׂוּ	6 By the word of YHWH heavens have been made,
וּבְרוּחַ פִּי כָל־צַבָּאִים:	and by the breath of his mouth all their host.
כַּיֵּסַף בִּיַּד מֵי הַיָּם	7 Gathering like the heap <sup>10</sup> the waters of the sea,
נָתַן בְּאֲצֻרוֹת תְּהוֹמוֹת:	putting in storehouses (the) deeps.
יִירָאוּ מִיְהוָה כָּל־הָאָרֶץ	8 Let them fear from YHWH, all the earth,
מִמֶּנּוּ יִגְדָּרוּ כָּל־יֹשְׁבֵי תֵבֵל:	<b>from him</b> let them dread <sup>11</sup> all inhabitants of (the) world.
כִּי הוּא אָמַר וַיְהִי	9 For <b>He</b> he spoke and it came to be,
הוּא־צִוָּה וַיַּעֲמֵד:	<b>He</b> he commanded and it stood firm.
יְהוָה הִפְרִי עֲצַת־גּוֹיִם	10 YHWH has brought to nothing <sup>12</sup> (the) counsel of nations
הֵנִיא מַחֲשָׁבוֹת עַמִּים:	He has frustrated the plans of peoples.
עֲצַת יְהוָה לְעוֹלָם תִּעֲמָד	11 <b>The counsel of YHWH to forever</b> stands,

<sup>7</sup> That is, God's work can be depended on.

<sup>8</sup> The pair of righteousness and justice is common, referring to both principle (will; order) and practice (rulings to put things right) (AM/SJF).

<sup>9</sup> *Hesed* here means God's providence in creation and dependability of nature (MW). It is often translated as "committed love" (AM). v.5b is remarkable in light of Isaiah 6 where God's glory fills the earth.

<sup>10</sup> There is a double allusion here to creation day 3 in Gen 1, and well as Exod 15:8 the Red Sea (Alter).

<sup>11</sup> Another pair: afraid/dread (AM). There is an intensification here (SJF). Fear...revere... (Segal).

<sup>12</sup> Literally, *broken*. But look for synonyms for "frustrated."



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מְחַשְׁבוֹת לְבוֹ לְדָר וְדָר:	the.plans in.his.heart to.generation and.generation.
אֲשֶׁר־יִגְוֶה	12 Blessed <sup>13</sup> (is) the.nation
אֲשֶׁר־יְהוָה אֱלֹהָיו	who-YHWH (is) its.God,
הָעָם   בָּחַר לְנַחֲלָה לּוֹ:	<b>the.people</b> he.chose as.an.inheritance for.himself.
מִשָּׁמַיִם הַבַּיִת יְהוָה	13 <b>From.heaven</b> he.looked YHWH,
רָאָה אֶת־כָּל־בְּנֵי הָאָדָם:	He.saw all.sons.of the.humankind.
מִמְכוּן־שִׁבְתּוֹ הַשָּׁמַיִם	14 <b>From.the.place.of-his.dwelling</b> he.gazed
אֵל כָּל־יֹשְׁבֵי הָאָרֶץ:	on all-the.inhabitants.of the.earth.
הַיֹּצֵר יַחַד לִבָּם	15 The.one.fashioning together their.hearts
הַמֵּבִין אֶל־כָּל־מַעֲשֵׂיהֶם:	(is) the.one.considering all- their.works.
אֵין־הַמֶּלֶךְ נוֹשָׁע בְּרֵב־חַיִל	16 There.is.not-the.king saved by.greatness.of <sup>14</sup> - an.army,
גִּבּוֹר לֹא־יִנָּצֵל בְּרֵב־כֹּחַ:	a.warrior not-will.be.delivered by.greatness.of-strength,
שֶׁקֶר הַסּוֹס לְתִשׁוּעָה	17 a.false (hope is) the.horse for.victory,
וּבְרֵב חַיִלּוֹ לֹא יִמְלֹט:	and. <b>by.the.greatness.of its.power</b> not it.will.rescue.
הִנֵּה עֵין יְהוָה אֶל־יִרְאַיוֹ	18 Look! <sup>15</sup> The.ey.e.of YHWH (is) on-those.fearing.him
לְמִיֹּחֲלִים לְחַסְדּוֹ:	on.those.hoping in.his.loyal.love,

<sup>13</sup> This word is neither a verb nor an adjective and so lacks an English equivalent. English uses words like “blessed,” “happy,” “fortunate,” or “privileged.” You might try expressions of wonder and disbelief, like “wow!”

<sup>14</sup> Notice the 3x רב ‘many’, contrasting this greatness with the really great of vv.18-19.

<sup>15</sup> An unexpected interjection, emphasizing the contrast.





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לְהַצִּיל מִמּוֹת נַפְשָׁם	19 to.deliver from.death their.lives <sup>16</sup>
וְלַחְיֹתָם בְּרָעֵב:	and.to.keep.them.alive in.the.famine.
נִפְשֵׁנוּ חִפְתָּה לַיהוָה	20 We <sup>17</sup> have.been.waiting for.YHWH
עֲזָרְנוּ וּמִגִּנְנוּ הוּא:	<b>our.help and.our.shield</b> (is) he,
כִּי־בּו יִשְׂמַח לִבֵּנוּ	21 for- <b>in.him</b> will.rejoice our.heart
כִּי בְשֵׁם קִדְשׁוֹ בָטַחְנוּ:	because <b>in.name.of his.holy</b> we.have.trusted.
יְהִי־חֶסֶדְךָ יְהוָה עָלֵינוּ	22 Let.it.be-your.loyal.love YHWH upon.us
כַּאֲשֶׁר יִחְלְנוּ לָךְ:	even.as we.have.hoped in.you.

<sup>16</sup> נפש is often translated “soul” but this implies a body/soul duality not present in the Hebrew. Here it refers to delivering their entire life (body and soul) from death. See also the next verse (v. 20) where it refers to an eager expectation embodied by the whole self.

<sup>17</sup> See note above on נפש. Try to preserve the same word here if you can, which is difficult in English.