
Psalm 33

Psalm 33:1–22

God's Involvement with His Creation

Outline of Chapter 33:

Inscription

- vv. 1–5 **The Psalmist Calls for a Musical Celebration of God and His perfection**
- vv. 6–9 **God Created the World and the Universe by the Word of His Power**
- vv. 10–15 **God is Involved with the Man of His Creation**
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Introduction: Since this is one of the first psalms which I will cover, I need to explain why I am placing it here, right after Gen. 14. This particular psalm was probably written by King David (see **below**, after the **inscription**); and therefore, was written a millennium after the events of this chapter. However, I don't particularly want to cover all of the psalms at one time, nor do I want to cover the majority of them while covering the life of David. Therefore, I have chosen to appropriately insert these psalms whenever I can come up with a reasonable excuse to do so. They are not necessarily being placed by their time of writing, and they are placed only partially due to their subject matter. Psalm 33 deals with the creation of the earth; therefore, it's placement in Genesis is apropos. It also deals with war and God's deliverance in war; therefore, inserting this psalm at the end of Gen. 14 is particularly appropriate. We do not know the exact occasion of this psalm; however, it's call for a new song and its subject matter seem to indicate that a victory at war has recently occurred. This is not absolutely necessary, as David, a man with a great past on the battlefield, could, at any time, look back and write this.

First, David calls upon those within his hearing to celebrate God with music. David first presents God as invariant, perfect, faithful, righteous and just; and that the earth is filled with His grace. Then, God is presented as the Creator and Restorer of the Universe (vv. 6–7). Then His involvement in the history of mankind is noted (vv. 8–10); His own plans are presented as eternal (v. 11); and blessings are invoked for the nation and people who belong to Him (v. 12). In fact, there is nothing in this psalm which presents our Lord as anything other than universal

Barnes breaks this psalm up into three parts: (1) the psalmist exhorts the reader to praise God (vv. 1–3); (2) he gives the reader reasons to praise God (vv. 4–19); and, (3) *the expression of a purpose thus to praise him* (vv. 20–22).¹ My take on the final three verses is that they provide the individual interaction between God and man, which is, in itself, a cause for praise. In the first portion of this psalm, the writer calls upon the reader to sing and to use musical instruments to praise God. When it comes to *why* should we praise God, the psalmist cites God's character and essence (vv. 4–5); His creation of the universe (vv. 6–9); the stability of His counsel and purposes (vv. 10–11); and His involvement and interaction with both those who acknowledge Him to be God and those who

¹ *Barnes' Notes, Volume 4*, F. C. Cook, editor; reprinted 1996 by Baker Books; p. 278. Yeah, I didn't follow him either, so that's why I quoted Barnes verbatim. The NIV Study Bible suggests the exact same outline; they suggest that the final three verses is a conclusion—a response to praise (I don't see it that way).

do not (vv. 12–19). Finally, in the third portion of this psalm, we have the purpose of the writer and those associated with him, which is to praise God.² The NIV Study Bible also breaks this up into the same three parts, vv. 1–3 being an introduction, vv. 20–22 a conclusion, and vv. 4–19 consisting of two parts of 8 verses each.³ I personally do not see that final division at all. Any break between vv. 11 and 12 seems to be arbitrary to me. Keil and Delitzsch give this psalm a similar division, most accurately allowing vv. 1–3 as an introduction; vv. 20–22 as a closing; and, most accurately, breaking up the remaining verses into eight tetrastichs (eight sections of four verses each). I will end this psalm by so dividing it, and letting it stand on its own with a bare minimum of commentary. The first line of each tetrastich, as well as the first lines of the introduction and the conclusion, have the Name of God in them, with the exception of vv. 14 and 16.

There is a universality to this psalm, even though it was probably written by David during Israel's client nation status⁴ under God. Any one at any time from any nation can exegete this psalm and find personal application. Or, as Barnes put it, *[this] psalm...is appropriate to the people of all lands and times, and will be better appreciated in proportion as men become more and more acquainted with God in the wisdom, the power, and the skill which he has shown in the works of creation, and in his providential government of the world.*⁵

An acrostic is a psalm wherein the first verse begins with an aleph, the second with a bēyth, etc. While this psalm is not a true acrostic, it does have 22 verses, one verse for each letter of the Hebrew alphabet. However, there is no other way to connect this to the Hebrew alphabet (v. 1 does not even have an aleph in it; several verses begin with the same letter, kaph; and I could discern no other alphabetic pattern). Psalm 103 is also a 22 verse psalm with no other alphabetic pattern. However, Psalm 34 is a true acrostic.

In the Septuagint, this is Psalm 32; in the Massoretic text it is Psalm 33.

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The Psalmist Calls for a Musical Celebration of God and His Perfection

Slavishly literal:

[by David](#)

[\(by David\)](#)

Moderately literal:

Psalm
33 inscription [\(by David\)](#)

Psalm 33 has no inscription in the Massoretic text, making it only one of four in the first book of the psalms (Psalms 1–41). It conspicuously falls between a large number of psalms which are ascribed to David. The previous 22 psalms are all ascribed to David in the inscription. The following eight are ascribed to David. This belongs to the first section of the book of Psalms, which appears to be strictly psalms of David. In the Septuagint, the inscription reads *by David*; there is no inscription in the Massoretic text.

It appears as though Psalm 33 is a continuation of Psalm 32 (we will discuss that later). It is not the same psalm, but somewhat of a companion psalm. Psalm 32, 33 and 34 all mention the *eye(s) of God*, which is another thing which ties them together and suggests that David wrote Psalm 33, as he wrote the other two psalms.

² This is pretty much a paraphrase of *Barnes' Notes, Volume 4*, F. C. Cook, editor; reprinted 1996 by Baker Books; p. 278.

³ *The NIV Study Bible*; ©1995 by The Zondervan Corporation; p. 810.

⁴ This is a *Thieme term* which refers to a nation today which fulfills the principal which God first iterated to Moses: "I will bless those who bless you and curse those who curse you." The client nation to God is responsible to maintain the canon of Scripture, as well as to disseminate the Word of God, both to its own people and to the world at large. This does not mean that the government or that all of the people of the client nation even realize that it is a client nation to God. The government need not function pro-actively in the responsibility of the nation; merely that they provide the freedom for the church to function.

⁵ *Barnes' Notes, Volume 4*, F. C. Cook, editor; reprinted 1996 by Baker Books; p. 278.

Barnes offers the counter-argument that there is nothing in this psalm which ties it directly to David (which is true of most of his psalms, apart from the inscription). Barnes points out that this psalm is so general that it could have been written by anyone anywhere at anytime after the instituting of the nation Israel. Barnes supposes that this psalm was originally just chunked into the other psalms by David, and, presumably, the Septuagint translators simply added the *by line*. Now, on the other hand, the previous psalm ends with the grace of God toward His righteous ones, which is a major theme of this psalm. Therefore, it could have been thought that this psalm was merely a continuation of the previous psalm, and therefore no *byline* would be necessary.

King David was the second king of Israel, called, in Scripture, *a man after God's own heart*. David wrote many of the psalms and the book of Samuel deals primarily with David and his rule.

		Celebrate [by shouting], Let Your grace be upon us, O Jehovah,
Rejoice, O righteous in Y^ehowah, for the upright ones—beautiful praise,	Psalm 33:1	just as we have placed our confidence in You. righteous ones in Y^ehowah, the upright ones—[celebrate with] beautiful praise.

**Shout out, you righteous ones in Jehovah;
Praise sounds exquisite to the upright!**

or

**Shout out in celebration, you righteous in Jehovah;
Shout out in celebration, you upright ones, in a beautiful song of praise!**

Now that we are dealing with poetry, we find that the rules are not all the same, the word usage is somewhat different, and the order of the words is sometimes even more different than we would expect. Therefore, let's see what others have done with this first verse:

CEV	You are the LORD's people. Obey him and celebrate! He deserves your praise.
<i>The Emphasized Bible</i>	Shout for joy, ye righteous in Yahweh, To the upright seemly is praise.
JPS (Tanakh)	Sing forth, O you righteous, to the LORD; it is fit that the upright acclaim Him.
NASB	Sing for joy in the LORD, O you righteous ones; Praise is becoming to the upright.
NIV	Sing joyfully to the LORD, you righteous; it is fitting for the upright to praise him.
<i>Young's Lit. Translation</i>	Sing, ye righteous, in Jehovah, For upright ones praise <i>is</i> comely.

As you see in the CEV, some of these paraphrases go pretty far away from the words which are found. The other translations are either word-for-word translations or relatively close to being word-for-word translations; therefore, their meaning does not deviate as much. We begin this psalm with the 2nd person, masculine plural, Piel imperative of *rânan* (רָנַן) [pronounced *raw-NAHN*], and it means *to give a ringing cry, to emit a tremulous sound, to vibrate the voice*. In the Piel, it means *to shout for joy, to rejoice*. When followed by a *lâmed*, it means *celebrate with shouting*. Strong's #7442 BDB #943. The Hebrew people were very demonstrative, and a song which begins like this might presumably cause the crowd to cheer aloud. The ones to whom David is speaking are called by the masculine plural adjective *tsaddîyq* (צַדִּיקִים) [pronounced *tsahd-DEEK*], which means *just, righteous, justified*. When used as a substantive, it would mean *righteous ones, justified ones*. Strong's #6662 BDB #843. This has two interpretations—in an assembly of worship, while there is singing, or the Word is being read aloud, or a sacrifice is being made—the righteous are those in attendance. The unbelieving Jew would have no reason to be in attendance (we are speaking theoretically here). *Righteous* also stands for those whom God has justified, which is the general assembly of all believers. As Jesus said to His disciples: **“Seek first His kingdom and His righteousness and all these things will be added to you.”** (Matt. 6:33). Paul concurs, writing to the Romans: **For, not knowing about God's righteousness, and seeking to establish their own, they did not subject themselves to the**

righteousness of God. For Christ is the end of the Law with reference to righteousness to everyone who believes (Rom. 10:3–4).

This is followed by *in Y^ehowah*. You will recall the often used phrase in the New Testament, *in Christ*. This means exactly the same thing. *In* is the prefixed preposition *bêyth*, which means *in, into, at, by, with, against*; the key is proximity. Strong's #none BDB #88. Man has always been ultimately righteous by association with God rather than by his personal behavior. This is what we find in the first few words of this psalm.

This is followed by the *lâmed* preposition. Recall that when *rânan* was followed by a *lâmed*, that it means *celebrate by shouting*. We actually would not translate the *lâmed*. What follows is the masculine plural adjective *yâshâr* (יָשָׁר) [pronounced *yaw-SHAWR*] and it means *right, correct, upright, straight, uniform, even*. It is in the masculine plural and is preceded by a definite article; therefore, it means *upright ones*. When describing man, it refers to *moral stability and stable, correct behavior and thinking*. Strong's #3477 BDB #449

What is to be emitted is the feminine singular adjective *nâ`zeh* (נֹאֲזְהָה) [pronounced *naw-VEH*], which means *comely, seemly, beautiful*. Strong's #5000 BDB #410. This is followed by the feminine singular noun *th^ehillâh* (תְּהִילָה) [pronounced *t^ehil-LAW*], which means *praise, a song of praise*. Strong's #8416 BDB #239.

What is difficult is that the main verb, *rânan*, can be followed by a *lâmed* preposition; however, that occurs a couple of words later and therefore, some translators have separated the verb from that preposition, allowing the preposition to begin the second line. We could carry the main verb for both lines,⁶ which would give us:

Shout in celebration, you justified ones in Jehovah;
Shout in celebration, you upright ones, a beautiful song of praise!

Offhand, I do not know of any other translator who took this approach; however, the use of the *lâmed* might allow for such an interpretation.

In some ways, this psalm—at least the first couple verses—appear to continue Psalm 32; the last verse in Psalm 32 is: *Be happy in Jehovah and rejoice, you righteous; and shout for joy, all of your who are upright in heart*. In fact, there is somewhat of an inverse relationship between these two psalms. Psalm 32 begins by speaking of those whose sins have been covered by God: *Blessed is he whose transgression [or, rebellion] has been forgiven, whose sin has been covered. Blessed is the man to whom Jehovah does not impute punishment for iniquity and in whose spirit there is no deceit*. In other words, it begins with forgiveness and ends with a call to shout for joy. Psalm 33 begins with a call to musically celebrate God's character and ends with salvation. The overall tenor and subjects of the psalms are different—David, in Psalm 32, speaks of God's temporal forgiveness throughout the bulk of the psalm and God's instruction via His Word; in Psalm 33, we speak of God's total involvement with mankind. In a way, these are two sides of the same coin. In Psalm 32, God's involvement with David is the topic and in the next psalm, it is God's involvement with His creation in general is covered. We spoke of Psalm 33—that it was very general and could have been written by anyone, at anytime, and anywhere. The previous psalm is quite another story—it speaks of a sin which David kept quiet, which would reasonably be his sin with Bathsheba, and we will, therefore, cover it at that time. My purpose here is to indicate that these are, in a way, twin psalms, possibly written together; in the first, David is being introspective and in the second, David is being extrospective.

Calling to celebrate because of being righteous is found elsewhere in the psalms; e.g., Psalm 97:12, which reads: *Be glad in Jehovah, you righteous ones; and give thanks to His holy name*. The psalms, being what they are, often call to man to rejoice in God (e.g., Psalm 92:1 147:1). Paul says the same thing to the Philippians: *Rejoice in the Lord always; and again, I say, rejoice!* (Phillip. 4:4).

⁶ This particular point of grammar—the carrying of the main verb over to the second line (called an ellipsis of repetition)—is found throughout this psalm.

**Give thanks to Y^ehowah with a lyre, with a
harp of ten strings;
Make a melody to Him!**

Psalm
33:2

**Give thanks to God with a lyre and with
stringed instruments;
make music of praise to Him!**

**Give thanks to God using musical instruments;
make music that praises Him!**

Just in case you have a King James Bible, there are two musical instruments found here, and not three. The King James' translators inserted a conjunction where none existed.⁷ It (the *harp of ten strings*) is also the same instrument in Psalm 144:9 but they are different instruments in Psalm 92:3.

We begin this verse with the Hiphil imperative of *yādāh* (יָדָה) [pronounced *yaw-DAWH*], which means , in the Qal and the Hiphil, *to profess, to confess, to give thanks, to praise, to celebrate*. Strong's #3034 (3027) BDB #392. Then two musical instruments are given. I honestly don't know what's up with some of those who belong to the Church of Christ, but there are several times throughout Scripture where men are called upon to use musical instruments in the praising of God—and, for reasons that I am unaware—some Church of God groups do not believe in accompanying choirs and vocalists with musical instruments. David, as well as the other psalmists, clearly recognize the power and persuasion of music (see also Psalm 71:22 92:3 144:9 147:7). Furthermore, music is found throughout Scripture, beginning in Genesis (Gen. 4:21); it is an integral part of the psalms, although we have lost the actual musical accompaniment; Paul mentions music in the epistles (I Cor. 14:7); and it is even mentioned in the last book of the Bible (Rev. 5:9). We will certainly have strong disagreements as to what is good music and what is not; however, I would wager that there will be music in heaven which will, despite our different tastes, take us to that same place that our favorite music does today.

We have no clear indication as to what the music of that time sounded like. There are too many variations: *pitch, duration, texture, rhythm, color and...form*:⁸ and, although we have developed a way to record music visually (which, nevertheless, does not even begin to record all that is there); the only real way to begin to grasp music is to hear it. Obviously, we will never hear the music of the ancient world. We have no idea as to its tempo, the range of abilities of the musicians, or anything else about the music. Even though there is music put out by *Christian* groups which make me cringe, I am certainly not the final authority on what is and what is not *Christian* music. All that we have remaining of these ancient psalms are the words, which are apparently the deciding factor. There are even obscure Hebrew words in the inscription which certainly had something to do with the actual music; however, even these meanings are lost to us. What we understand from this passage is that the music was generally (if not always) accompanied by musical instruments and that it was very demonstrative.

What we know about musical instruments of the ancient world, apart from the words found in these passages, is based upon drawings on walls and the discovery of some of these old instruments as well. In my ZPEB, I have the picture of a lyre which comes from the 15th century B.C., and is a box with six strings stretched across the box to a piece of bamboo. McGee says it is like a zither. On the next page are drawn pictures of eight different stringed instruments from the ancient world. My familiarity with harps has its foundation in Marx Brothers movies, and from having been to a house wherein was a harp. Here, we have a 10-stringed harp, which is in keeping with several of the pictures in ZPEB.⁹

In this verse, we also have a *kînnôwr* (כִּנּוֹר) [pronounced *kin-NOHR*], which means *lyre*. This is a stringed instrument used in popular and sacred music. Strong's #3658 BDB #490. This was David's instrument of choice (I Sam. 16:16 19:9 Psalm 43:4 62:8). From the pictures, it appears as though the music came from the strings without much thought given to the body of the instrument, which could shape the sound of the strings. It did not appear that there was any way to adjust the pitch of the individual strings; and certainly not a way to do so while playing. This would mean that a song would be limited to six notes and any combination of those notes.

⁷ See *Barnes' Notes, Volume 2*, F. C. Cook, editor; reprinted 1996 by Baker Books; p. 279 for more information, if necessary.

⁸ *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*; Merrill Tenney, ed., Zondervan Publishing House, ©1976; Vol. 4, p. 311.

⁹ *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*; Merrill Tenney, ed., Zondervan Publishing House, ©1976; Vol. 4, p. 323.

Rotherham suggests that this might refer to a lute, instead, with is, essentially, a three-stringed guitar; and our extant pictures of this lute have women playing the instrument. According to my *Bible Almanac*, the lute was not used in the Temple worship¹⁰ (they do not justify this statement, however). The lyre is actually a smaller but more sophisticated stringed instrument than the lute.

The final verb is the Piel imperative of *zâmar* (זָמַר) [pronounced *zaw-MAHR*], which means *to make music in praise of God, to make melody* and it is found only in poetry. Strong's #2167 (& #2168) BDB #274. David encourages those to make music which praises God.

**Sing to Him a song, new;
Do well to play [a stringed instrument] in a
loud shout.**

Psalm
33:3

**Sing a new song to Him;
Play skillfully [on stringed instruments] with a
loud shout.**

**Sing a new song to Him;
Play skillfully on a stringed instrument, accompanied with loud shouts.**

This verse continues with the introduction. Again, we have a 2nd person masculine singular, imperative (a Qal imperative) of *shîyr* (שָׁיַר) [pronounced *sheer*], which means *to sing*. The first use of this verb is in Ex. 15:1 when Moses and the sons of Israel sang a victory song to Jehovah. We will find this word throughout the psalms (e.g., Psalm 7:title 13:6 33:3 21:13). Strong's #7891 BDB #1010. This is followed by *to Him a new song*. My guess is that David wrote Psalm 32 and 33 together and one led into the other; this verse simply refers to the new psalm. As Barnes puts it: *A song specially composed for this occasion; expressive of the peculiar feelings suggested by this occasion, or appropriate to this new manifestation of the Divine goodness and mercy. Such occasions, exhibiting some new phrase of the Divine goodness, demanded new language appropriate to them. So now, new hymns of praise, and new tunes in music, are demanded to meet the every-varying manifestations of the mercy of God; and as the church is extended in the world, its modes of praise must be adapted to the new state of things which will arise. Nothing could be more absurd than to attempt to restrict the church in its praises to the exact words which were used in the time of David, or to the music which was employed then.*¹¹ We find this same phrase in Psalm 40:3 96:1 98:1 144:9 149:1, as well as in Isa. 42:10 Rev. 5:9 14:3. This new song could refer to Christ's blood sacrifice for our souls.

On the second line, we have the Hiphil imperative of an interesting word *yâṭa^bv* (יָטַב) [pronounced *yaw-TA^BV*], which means *to be good, well, to be pleasing, to do good, to deal well, to make glad, to make a thing good*. In the Hiphil, it means *to do well, to cause to do well, to do rightly, to do good, to make merry, to make fit, to adjust*. Strong's #3190 BDB #405. Following this is the Piel infinitive construct of *nâgan* (נָגַן) [pronounced *naw-GAHN*], which means *to touch, to play a stringed instrument*. Strong's #5059 BDB #618. These two words are variously translated together as *play skillfully* (NASB, NIV, Young), *play skillfully on the strings* (Owen), *with skill, sweep the strings* (Rotherham), and *play beautiful music* (CEV).

This is followed by the *bêyth* preposition, which can mean *in, among, in the midst of, with, in the presence of, near*; and the feminine singular noun *t'ârûw'âh* (תָּרַוּ אֵהָא) [pronounced *t'rû-AWH*], which means *a shout or blast* [of war, alarm or joy]. Strong's #8643 BDB #929. One of my memories of a great Christmas was a beautiful sunny day when my friend Kenny was here and we were at another family's house, and Kenny was playing solo on a violin (okay, fiddle) and during a particularly good part, Steve would cry out, which was a perfect addition. This is not a new thing, as is obvious with this verse. 3,000 years ago, the moving portion of a song on a stringed instrument would cause a listener to shout aloud in joy, as a response and an accompaniment. We find similar phrasing in Psalm 98:4: **Shout joyfully to Jehovah, all the earth; break forth and sing for joy and sing praises!** And Psalm 35:27: **Let them shout for joy and rejoice, those who favor my vindication; and let them continually say, "Jehovah be magnified, Who delights in the prosperity of His servant."** Psalm 47:1: **Clap your hands, all people; shout to God with the voice of joy.**

¹⁰ *The Bible Almanac*, J.I. Packer, Merrill C. Tenney, William White, Jr.; ©1980 Thomas Nelson Publishers; p. 498.

¹¹ *Barnes' Notes, Volume 2*, F. C. Cook, editor; reprinted 1996 by Baker Books; p. 279.

We are told in this psalm to sing enthusiastically to the Lord because of His perfect character and because He is our creator. In Revelation, we will sing a new song to Him. **And they sang a new song, saying, "Worthy You are to take the book and to break its seals, for You were slain and you purchased for God with Your blood men from every tribe and tongue and people and nation. And You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to our God; and they will reign upon the earth."** (Rev. 5:9–10). You see, we sing to Him in heaven because He has redeemed us; because He has paid for us with His blood.

**For correct [is] a Word of Y^ehowah
and all of His work in faithfulness.**

Psalm
33:4

**For the Word of Y^ehowah [is] accurate [and
faithful to the truth]
and all of His work [is] dependable.**

**For the Word of Jehovah is accurate
and all that He does can be depended upon.**

With v. 4, we break away from the imperatives and that which is God's is described. The shouting aloud of the previous verse was not simply a response to the music, but to what David had to say. In the Old Testament, there was no one who was as dedicated to the Word of God as David. He recognized its importance and studied it regularly. He was a man after God's Own heart, as the Scripture says. Here he describes the word of Jehovah with the adjective *yâshâr* (יָשָׁר) [pronounced *yaw-SHAWR*], which means *right, correct, upright, straight, uniform, accurate, lacking in contradiction, having internal integrity, even*. When teaching non-Euclidian geometry to my honor students, I taught them the concept of internal uniformity—that is, there could be no internal contradictions in a proper system of mathematics. When used of God or to God's Word, *yâshâr* means *no internal contradictions*. Strong's #3477 BDB #449. David referred to Scripture when he spoke of the Word of God; Christ Jesus was the living Word of God, as John called Him in the first chapter of John. God's Word is the basis for creation, for His Law, for His continued support. Psalm 19:8: **The precepts of Jehovah are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of Jehovah is pure, enlightening the eyes.** Psalm 147:8: **He declares His words to Jacob; His statutes and His ordinances to Israel.** The NIV Study Bible: [His Word is]...*right and true. Not chaotic, devious or erratic. Under the Lord's rule in the creation there is goodness, order and dependability.*¹² It is God's Word which expresses His true essence.

Then we have *and all of His...* which is followed by *ma'ăseh* (מַעֲשֵׂה) [pronounced *mah-ġa-SEH*] and it means *deed, work, that which is done*. When exegeting this verse, Thieme rendered this as *provision*. Strong's #4639 BDB #795. This is followed by the *bêyth* preposition (a favorite of David's in this psalm) and the feminine singular noun *emûnwâh* (עִמּוּנָה) [pronounced *em-oo-NAWH*] and it means *firmness, steadiness, steadfast, dependable, faithfulness*. It means this is something that you can lean into; you can brace yourself against it; you can steady yourself with it. Strong's #530 BDB #53. When God says something, it is absolutely true and can be depended upon. In other words, that which God has said and done, can be depended upon and you can steady yourself against it. Psalm 119:90: **Your faithfulness is found in all generations; You established the earth and it stands firm.** Because of God's creation, we can place our dependence upon Him. **All the paths of Jehovah are grace and truth to those who keep His covenant and His testimonies** (Psalm 25:10).

Barnes noted: *The fact that God says a thing is the highest proof that it is true...He does all that he promises, and all that he does is such as to claim universal confidence. Whatever he does is, from the very fact that he does it, worth of the confidence of all his creatures...God is the only Being of whom we have any knowledge, concerning whom we can feel this certain assurance.*¹³

**Loving righteousness and justice,
[the] grace of Y^ehowah has filled the land.**

Psalm
33:5

**Loving righteousness and justice,
the land is filled with the grace of Y^ehowah.**

¹² *The NIV Study Bible*; ©1995 by The Zondervan Corporation; p. 810.

¹³ *Barnes' Notes, Volume 4*, F. C. Cook, editor; reprinted 1996 by Baker Books; p. 279.

**God continually loves righteousness and justice,
and the land finds itself filled with the grace of Jehovah.**

This verse begins with the Qal active participle of *ʾāhēb* (אָהֵב) [pronounced *aw-HAYV^B*], which means *to love*. Strong's #157 BDB #12. There are two things which God loves, and they are named here: righteousness and justice. The first is the feminine singular noun *ts^odāqâh* (צְדָקָה) [pronounced *ts^odaw-KAW*], which means *righteousness, executed righteousness and justice, righteous vindication*. Strong's #6666 BDB #842. The second is the masculine singular noun *mish^opâṭ* (מִשְׁפָּט) [pronounced *mish-PAWT*], which means *judgement, a verdict rendered by a judge, the act of deciding a case, the place where a judgement is rendered, manner, custom, fashion*. Strong's #4941 BDB #1048. Psalm 11:7: *For Jehovah is righteous; He loves righteousness. The upright will behold His face.* Psalm 37:28–29: *For Jehovah loves justice, and He does not forsake His godly ones—they are preserved forever. However, the descendants of the wicked will be cut off. The righteous will inherit the land and they will live in it forever.*

The next line begin with the masculine singular construct of *cheṣed* (חֶסֶד) [pronounced *KHEH-sed*], which means *grace, benevolence, mercy, kindness*. Strong's #2617 BDB #338. The main verb is the 3rd person feminine singular, Qal perfect of *to fill, to fill up*. The subject of this verb is, therefore, *the land* or *the earth*. That is the feminine singular noun *ʾerets* (אֶרֶץ) [pronounced *EH-rets*], which means *earth (all or a portion of it), land*. Strong's #776 BDB #75. *Grace* is not the subject, as *grace* is a masculine singular noun. *The earth is filled with Your grace, O Jehovah; teach me your statutes* (Psalm 119:64). *How valuable is your grace, O Jehovah—it is in all the heavens; your faithfulness in the skies. Your righteousness is like the mountains of God; Your judgments are like the great deep. O Jehovah, You preserve man and beast. How valuable is Your grace, O God. And the children of men take refuge in the shadow of Your wings. They drink their fill of the abundance of Your house and You give them to drink of the river of Your delights. For with You is the fountain of life and in Your light, we see light. Continue Your grace to those who know You and Your righteousness to the upright in heart* (Psalm 36:5–9).

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God Created the World and the Universe by the Word of His Power

Gen. 1:6–10

<p>In a word of Y^ehowah, the heavens were made, and in a breath of His mouth, all their host</p>	<p>Psalm 33:6</p>	<p>By the word of Y^ehowah were the heavens made, and by the breath of His mouth, all their hosts.</p>
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**By the word of Jehovah were the heavens made,
and by the breath of His mouth were the stars of the heavens constructed.**

In previous verses, God's Word is said to be dependable and true. This is now illustrated by creation, all of which came about by the Word of His power. God merely spoke and brought the universe into existence.

We begin this verse with the *bêyth* preposition again. Here, it would be correctly rendered *in, with* or *by*. The verb is the Niphal perfect of *ʿāsâh* (עָשָׂה) [pronounced *gaw-SAWH*] which means *to do, to make, to construct, to fashion, to form, to prepare*. The Niphal is the passive stem, meaning that the heavens *were made, constructed* or *fashioned*. Strong's #6213 BDB #793. *Then God said "Let there be an atmosphere in the midst of the waters, and let it separate the waters from the waters." And God made the atmosphere and separated the waters which were below the atmosphere from the waters which were above the atmosphere. And it came to pass. And God called the atmosphere heaven. And there was evening and there was morning, a second day* (Gen. 1:6–7). *Praise Him, highest heavens, and the waters that are above the heavens. Let them praise the name of Jehovah, for He commanded and they were created. He has also established them forever and ever; He has made a decree which will not pass away* (Psalm 148:4–6).

Heavens is most often found in the dual, not in the plural. I must admit that bothered me for a long time. In the church where I was raised, I was taught that there were the three heavens—the first heaven, or the earth's atmosphere; the second heaven, or space; and the third heaven, or God's throne room. Therefore, when I read the word *heavens* in the dual, I really wanted to see *heavens*, plural, as in three. However, we are speaking of creation, and in creation, there are two kinds of heavens—there is atmosphere, which for us is nitrogen, oxygen, water vapor and several other gases—and there is space, wherein we have no atmosphere. In other words, from a scientific standpoint, even though this is phrased in layman's language, we have exactly two types of *heavens* created—space and atmosphere.

In the second line, we also have *bêyth* again and the feminine singular construct of *rûwach* (רוּחַ) [pronounced *ROO-ahkh*], which means *wind, breath, spirit, apparition*. Strong's #7307 BDB #924. When we speak, we are exuding our breath. This is, in part, what is meant. When God speaks, the breath leaves His mouth and what He calls into creation comes to pass. However, part of God's creative force is the Holy Spirit, Who goes forth and does that which God commands. What is *made by the breath of His mouth* is *all their* and we have the masculine singular noun *tsâbâ`* (צָבָא) [pronounced *tsaw^b-VAW*], and it can mean *army, war, or warfare*. It is usually translated *hosts* in the KJV, which here would refer to the armies of stars in the heavens. Strong's #6635 BDB #838. *The stars are represented as armies or marshaled hosts, led forth at his command, and under his direction.*¹⁴

This takes us to the first chapter of Genesis and the creation of everything—God spoke and the heavens and all of the stars and planets of the heavens were created. **By faith, we understand that the ages were prepared by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things which are visible** (Heb. 11:3). **By the Word of God, the heavens existed long ago and the earth was formed out of water¹⁵ and by water** (II Peter 3:5b). Now, it is interesting that the author of this psalm would speak of the creation of the heavens and the host of the heavens and not mention the earth—however, in all reality, what we have here is God creating space and matter. In the creation of space and matter, this included planet earth. So the psalmist really didn't leave anything out. To someone of the ancient world, it might have been disconcerting that David did not mention the earth; however, to us, who have the most rudimentary understanding of the universe, we realize that David herein has, in all actuality, mentioned the earth. In other words, there are ideas here, couched in poetic language, that we would not have expected from ancient man. They belie the understanding of the Creator of the Universe.

Now you will note that David dealt with that which was most important first—God's character. Vv. 4–5 tell us of God's character first, and these two verses tell of His creation and restoration of the earth.

**Gathering as the heap waters of the sea,
putting in storehouses deeps;**

Psalm
33:7

**Gathering the waters of the sea into a mass,
placing the subterranean oceans into storage
areas.**

**Gathering the waters of the sea into masses,
placing the subterranean oceans into storage places.**

We have another participle (a Qal active participle) of *kânaç* (כָּנַח) [pronounced *kaw-NAHS*], which means *to gather, to collect*. Strong's #3664 BDB #488. The participle does not refer to a one-time deal, as a verb in the perfect tense would, but to a continuous process. God continues to gather the sea together. He maintains them within their borders.

Jehovah gathers as the masculine singular of *nêd* (נָד) [pronounced *nade*], which means *a heap* (of waters). Strong's #5067 BDB #622. It is preceded by a definite article. What God gathers as a heap are the *waters of the sea*. According to Rotherham, this should read: *Who gathered as into a skin-bottle the waters of the sea*. He bases this upon the readings in the Aramaic, Septuagint and Syriac codices. The NEB says *goat-skins*, and bases this

¹⁴ *Barnes' Notes, Volume 4*, F. C. Cook, editor; reprinted 1996 by Baker Books; p. 280.

¹⁵ What is meant is that water covered the earth and that God brought the land up, out of the water (Gen. 1:10).

upon the Septuagint. In any case, God set specific boundaries for the seas; he designed specific containers for the waters of the earth.

Then God placed in storehouses the deeps. The word for storehouses, in the Hebrew, is the masculine plural of *ôtsâr* (אוֹצָר) [pronounced *oh-TSAWR*] and it is a *depository, a storehouse, a treasury*. It is where things are laid up in storage, whether it be grain, gold or rain. Strong's #214 BDB #69. This indicates that God, from the beginning, stored aside a great deal of water into some sort of a depository or storehouse. What He stored was the feminine plural of *t^hôwm* (תְּהוֹמִים) [pronounced *t^h-HOME*], which is a *surging mass of water, either a sea or a subterranean water-supply*. In the plural, it can mean *bursts of water*. The same word is used for the *abyss, the primeval oceans, the vast depths*. Strong's #8415 BDB #1062. Although it appears as though this is a reference to underground water supplies, this could also refer to a great deal of water which was amassed in the atmosphere as well. Some creationists suggests that there was a *canopy* of water vapor in the skies during the time of antediluvian man.

The parallel verse in Genesis reads: **Then God said, "Let the waters below the heavens be gathered into one place, and let the dry land appear"; and it came to pass** (Gen. 1:9). God told Job, "[Who] enclosed the sea with doors, when, bursting forth, it went out from the womb; when I made a cloud its garment and thick darkness its swaddling band; and I placed boundaries on it and I set a bolt and doors, and I said, 'So far you will come, but no further; and here your proud waves will stop?'" (Job 38:8–11). **You have set a boundary that they may not pass over that they may not return to cover the earth** (Psalm 104:9) **"Do you not fear Me?" declares Jehovah. "Do you not tremble in My presence? For I placed the sand as a boundary for the sea—an eternal decree, so that it cannot cross over it; though the waves toss, yet they will not prevail; though they roar, they will cannot cross over it."** (Jer. 2:22–23; see also Prov. 8:28–29).¹⁶

**Will fear Y^ehowah all the earth [or, land],
from Him will fear all inhabitants of [the] world.**

Psalm
33:8

**All the earth will fear Y^ehowah,
all of the inhabitants of the world will stand in
awe on account of Him.**

**Let all of the earth fear Jehovah,
and all of the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of Him.**

The first verb is a change of pace; it is the 3rd person masculine plural, Qal imperfect of *yârê'* (יָרַא) [pronounced *yaw-RAY*] means *to fear, to fear-respect, to reverence, to have a reverential respect*. Strong's #3372 BDB #431. The subject of the verb is sort of a problem, as it appears to be *all of the earth* or *all of the land*; however, both nouns are in the singular. *All of the earth* is simply a metonym for *all of the inhabitants of the earth*. Now, although I would choose to teach this psalm after exegeting the book of Genesis, bear in mind that this psalm was written during the time of King David's monarchy, during a time when Israel was at a peak in its power and relationship to God. However, the psalmist understood, as did every other writer of Scripture, that the God of Israel was the God of the Universe, One Who demanded reverential-fear from all mankind. Therefore, throughout this psalm, Jehovah God of Israel is presented as the God of all mankind.

This reverential respect/fear is a theme throughout Scripture (Lev. 19:14 Deut. 4:10 14:23 31:12–13 I Chron. 16:25 Psalm 67:7 96:9 112:1 Prov. 9:10 Matt. 10:26 Rev. 14:7)—it is not simply some discarded Old Testament doctrine. One of the very simple illustrations of our Lord's deity is in our reverence to Him. I Chron. 16:15 reads: **For great is Jehovah, and greatly to be praised. And He is to be feared above all gods.** Deut. 6:13: **You will fear Jehovah your God; and you will worship Him and swear by His name. You will not follow other gods—not any of the gods of the peoples who surround you, for Jehovah your God is in your midst and He is a jealous God; otherwise the anger of Jehovah your God will be kindled against you, and He will wipe you off the face of the earth.** Christ Jesus was also the recipient of worship: **And those who were in the board worshiped Him, saying, "You are certainly God's Son!"** (Matt. 14:33). **And when they [the disciples] saw Him, they worshiped Him** (Matt. 28:17a). **And when He again brings the first-born into the world, He says, "And let all the angels of God**

¹⁶ The NASB references several verses which have to do with God, during the history of man, gathering waters into heaps (e.g., at the exodus); however, this verse is not a reference to that, but to the restoration of the earth.

worship Him." (Heb. 1:6; Deut. 32:43 in the Septuagint). **That, at the name of Jesus, every knee should bow, of those who are in heaven, and on earth, and under the earth** (Philip. 2:10).

The second line begins with the preposition *mîn* and the 3rd person masculine singular suffix. Literally, this means *from Him* or *out from Him*. However, *mîn* also means *on account of, since, above, than, so that not*. Strong's #4480 BDB #577. In the English, we generally place this phrase at the end of the second line.

Now, it is with the next verb, we have a plural subject. That verb is the 3rd person masculine plural, Qal imperfect of *gûwr* (גּוּר) [pronounced *goor*], which means *to dread, to be afraid of, to stand in awe of*. Strong's #1481 BDB #158.¹⁷ Those who will fear God are those who *are inhabiting* (Qal active participle, masculine plural construct) the feminine singular noun *tê^bvêl* (תֵּבֵל) [pronounced *tay^b-VAYL*], which means *the fertile and inhabited earth, the habitable globe, world*. This is the word often used in poetry in connection to the creation of the entire earth. Strong's #8398 BDB #385.

What is clear is that God has a tremendous, unimaginable power, which is revealed in His creation. Therefore, we stand in awe of Him; we rightfully give to Him our respect.

**For He spoke and so he was
He commanded and so he took a stand.**

Psalm
33:9

**For He spoke, and then it was;
He commanded, and it endured.**

**For He spoke, and then it came to pass;
He commanded, and it remains.**

You will note in the most literal rendering of this verse, a great deal of the meaning is lost. Part of this is due to the variance in what the Hebrew words can mean and part of it is that the Hebrew has no neuter gender. We have the 3rd person, personal pronoun used twice in this verse; it is a pronoun used often for emphasis, which is its use here. What God did was the Qal perfect of *ʾamar* (אָמַר) [pronounced *aw-MARH*], which simply means *to speak, to say, to utter*. Strong's #559 BDB #55. This is followed by the *wâw* consecutive and the Qal imperfect of *hâyâh* (הָיָה) [pronounced *haw-YAW*], which means *to be*. Without a specific subject and object, it often means *and it will come to be, and it will come to pass, then it came to pass* (with the *wâw* consecutive). Strong's #1961 BDB #224. The masculine singularity of the verb does not refer to God but is equivalent to the Greek neuter case.

The verb in the second line is the 3rd person masculine singular, Piel perfect of *tsâwâh* (צָוָה) [pronounced *tsaw-WAW*], which means *to commission, to mandate, to lay charge upon, to give charge to, charge, command, order*. This is a verb found only in the Piel. Strong's #6680 BDB #845. The 3rd person masculine singular refers back to the personal pronoun (used again in the second line). The second verb is the Qal imperfect of *ʿamad* (עָמַד) [pronounced *gaw-MAHD*], which means *to take a stand, to stand, to remain, to endure, to withstand*. Strong's #5975 BDB #763. What God has commanded has taken a stand and had endured.

David calls to our attention that whatever God called into being, it came into being. Throughout the first chapter of Genesis, we have, *And God said...and...came into being*; as a for instance: **And God said, "Let there be light." And light was** (Gen. 1:3). The same formula is found in Gen. 1:6, 9, 11, 14, 20, 24, 26. Psalm 148, after called upon all His creation to praise him, reads: **Let them praise the name of Jehovah, for He commanded and they were created** (Psalm 148:5).

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¹⁷ This is a homonym which has three very different meanings.

God Is Involved with the Man of His Creation

<p>Y^ehowah brings to nought counsel of nations, He opposes plans of peoples.</p>	<p>Psalm 33:10</p>	<p>Y^ehowah makes void the wisdom of [Gentile] nations, He stands in opposition to the plans of people.</p>
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**Jehovah brings to nothing the wisdom and counsel of heathen nations,
and He frustrates the plans and purposes of the heathen.**

In the previous few verses, we looked at the creative power of God. Some of our founding fathers were not Christians, as we understand Christians to be, but deists (or so I recall from my American history classes of so many years ago). They have no trouble believing that God created the heavens and the earth. They come to this conclusion from the orderliness of the world. However, they believe that God, for whatever reason, has walked away from His creation and left man completely in charge. In other words, if we don't do it, it doesn't get done. And, more particularly, if you don't look out for #1, then no one will. Now, it is obvious that we have some responsibility in this world and that, because of our free will, what we do with our lives is important. However, it is false that only we can take care of ourselves. God's hand and His sovereignty continue to play a part in this world's affairs. And God takes care of us: "For this reason, I say to you, do not be overly concerned about your need for what you will eat or what you will drink; for your body, for what you will put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? Observe the birds in the air: they don't sow, nor do they reap, nor do they gather produce into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not more important than they? What which of you by being anxious can add a cubit to his life's span? And why are you anxious about clothing? Observe how the lilies of the field grow: they do not toil, nor do they spin; yet I say to you, not even Solomon in all his glory did not clothe himself like one of these. So if God arrays the grass of the field, which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the furnace, will he not do more for you, you men of a little faith? Do not be overly concerned the, saying, 'What will we eat?' or 'What will we drink?' or 'With what will we clothe ourselves?' For these are things which the Gentiles eagerly search for; however, your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. Consequently, seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all of these things will be provided for you. Therefore, do not be anxious for tomorrow; for tomorrow will take care of itself. Each day has enough evil of its own." [i.e., you don't need to add additional evil for each day by being worried about your basic provisions] (Matt. 6:25–34). Like all spiritual concepts, this can be distorted. This doesn't mean that we go sit on a park bench and God provides for us. God provides the means by which we secure our basic necessities. Paul clearly told us, "if a man does not provide for his family, he is worse than an infidel." (I Tim. 5:8). The key is the mental attitude. Jesus clearly explained to His disciples that God was providing that day their necessities for them. In other words, God still was a part of their day-to-day lives, which is the opposite of what the deists taught. In these verses which follow, David tells us that God is clearly involved in all that we do. Not only has He created this earth and universe, but He is still actively involved.

The first thing that He is said to do is the Hiphil perfect of *pârar* (פָּרַר) [pronounced *paw-RAHR*], which means *to break, to break in pieces, to make void, to make of no effect, to declare void, to bring to nothing, to take away, to avert, to violate (a covenant), to frustrate* in the Hiphil. Strong's #6331 and 6565 BDB #830. What God brings to nothing is the feminine singular construct of *êtsâh* (עֵצָה) [pronounced *gay-TZAW*], which means *counsel, advice, wisdom, purpose*. Strong's #6098 BDB #420. This is followed by the very familiar word *gôwyîm* (גּוֹיִם) [pronounced *GOH-yeem*], which you recognize as *goy* or *goyim*. This word means *people, nation*; in the plural it is used predominantly (if not exclusively) for Gentile nations. We might take it today to mean *heathen nations*. Strong's #1471 BDB #156.

The next thing which God does is the Hiphil perfect of *nûw* (נָוָה) [pronounced *noo*] which means *to stand in opposition to, to take a stand against (such that the aims, position, desire, etc. of the other person is hindered, nullified, or restrained)*. Strong's #5106 BDB #626. What God stands in opposition to is the feminine plural construct of *mach^eshâ^bvâh* (מַחְשָׁבוֹת) [*makh-SHE^b-veth* (pronunciation, mine)], which means *thoughts, devices, plans, purposes*. Strong's #4284 BDB #364. These are the *plans and purposes* of the masculine plural of *am* (אָמ) [pronounced *ahm*], which means *people*. By context, it refers to the Gentiles of the heathen nations surrounding Israel. Strong's #5971 BDB #766. The world is filled with individuals and nations which great plans and ideas, which God, as He so plans, brings to nothing, if this is within His purposes.

Apparently somewhere in a prominent place in or on the United Nations building, we have something akin to Isa. 2:4 posted; Isa. 2:4b reads: **And they will hammer their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will not lift up sword against nation, and never again will they learn war.** McGee suggests that instead, this is the verse that should be used: **Y^ehowah makes void the wisdom of [Gentile] nations; He stands in opposition to the plans of people** (Psalm 33:10).¹⁸

At the time that this psalm was written, He had brought into being the nation Israel and God worked through the nation Israel. However, the majority of the world was in opposition to Israel, and therefore, God had to step in and take care of these other nations. That is what this portion of the psalm is about. **Why are the Gentiles in an uproar and why do the peoples plot a vain thing? The kings of the earth take their stand and the rulers take counsel together against Jehovah and against His Messiah. Let us tear their chains of bondage apart and cast away their cords from us!** He Who is enthroned in the heavens laughs—Jehovah scoffs at them. Then He will speak to them in His anger, and terrify them in His fury. But as for Me, I have installed My king, upon Zion, My holy mountain (Psalm 2:1–6). **“You devise a plan, but it will be thwarted; you state a proposal, but it will not stand, for Immanuel is with us.”** (Isa. 8:10).

Barnes summarizes this verse: *God, by his own overruling purpose and providence, frustrates the designs of the nations of the earth; that he carries forward his own designs and purposes in spite of theirs; that their plans avail nothing when they come in competition with his...whatever may be the thoughts and purposes of men, if they are opposed to the plans of God...they will be rendered futile or vain. God is a great and glorious Sovereign over all, and he will make everything subordinate to the promotion of his own great designs.*¹⁹

**A counsel of Y^ehowah forever stands,
thoughts of His heart to generation and
generation.**

Psalm
33:11

**The counsel of Y^ehowah endures forever,
and the thoughts of His heart [endure] from
generation to generation.**

**The advice and counsel of Jehovah endures forever;
the thoughts of His heart also endure throughout all generations.**

We have the word *counsel* again, but this time it belongs to Jehovah God. Then we have the lâmed preposition and the masculine singular noun **ʿôwlâm** (עוֹלָם) [pronounced *ô-LAWM*], a word indicating *long duration, perpetuity, antiquity, futurity*. Strong's #5769 (& #5865) BDB #761. With the lâmed preposition, it means *forever*. What god's counsel does is the Qal imperfect of **ʿamad** (אָמַד) [pronounced *ô-MAHD*], which means *to take a stand, to stand, to remain, to endure, to withstand*. Strong's #5975 BDB #763.

The next line is without a verb, and therefore borrows the verb from the previous line. The thoughts of God's heart endure, literally, *to a generation and a generation*. This is rendered *from generation to generation* (Rotherham, NASB); *to all generations* (KJV, NRSV, REB, Young); *from age to age* (NJB). Strong's #1755 BDB #189. God is eternal and His thinking is eternal. His Word is a proof of that. There have been millions of books which have been written. However, there is no book like the Bible. The newest portion of Scripture is almost 2000 years old; older portions have stood for 3000–4000 years—and man still goes to the Bible for comfort and guidance. That's because it is God's Word, and the thoughts of His heart will endure throughout all generations. **Many are the plans in a man's heart, but the counsel of Jehovah will stand** (Prov. 19:21). **For your thoughts are not my thoughts neither are your ways My ways,** declares Jehovah. **“For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and My thoughts higher than your thoughts.”** (Isa. 55:8). Barnes: *The plans of God are not changed by the passing off of one generation and the coming on of another; by new dynasties of kings, or by the revolutions that may occur in states and empires. Men can seldom cause their plans to be carried forward beyond the generation in which they live; and they can have no security that coming generations, with their own plans, will not abolish or change all that has been devised or purposed before. No man can make it certain that his own will, even in regard to prosperity, will be carried out in the generation that succeeds him. No monarch can make it certain*

¹⁸ J. Vernon McGee, *Psalms Volume 1*; Thru the Bible Books, ©1977, p. 173.

¹⁹ *Barnes' Notes, Volume 4*, F. C. Cook, editor; reprinted 1996 by Baker Books; p. 281.

that his plans will be perfected by his successors. Schemes devised with the profoundest care and the highest wisdom may be set aside by those who are next in power; and no individual can hope that coming ages will feel sufficient interest in hi or his memory to carry on his plans. Who now feels any obligation to carry out the projects of Ceasar or Alexander? How long since have all their pinas passed away! So it will be with all who are now playing their parts on the earth! But none of these things affect the purposes of Him who will continue to live and to carry out his own designs when all the generations of men shall have passed away.²⁰

**Blessings of the nation that Y^ehowah [is] his
God;
the people He has chosen for a possession
for Him.**

Psalm
33:12

**Happiness to the nation whose God is
Y^ehowah;
[happiness to] the people He has chosen for
His own possession.**

**Happiness to the nation whose God is Jehovah;
and happiness to the people whom He has chosen for his own.**

V. 12 begins with the masculine plural construct of *ʾash^erêy* (אֲשֶׁרַי) [pronounced *awsh^e-RAY*], which means *blessedness, happiness*. (This appears to be the only form that this noun is found in). It is usually rendered *happy [are], blessed [is, are]*. It means that either the subject is happy or they are in a desirable position. Strong's #835 BDB #80. The blessings or happinesses go to the nation over which Y^ehowah is their God. Recall that this was back during a time of national gods and goddesses, and for the foreigner, they often thought of Jehovah God as just another of the many national gods of the earth at that time. Here, the Bible affirms happiness and blessings to the nation which is under Jehovah God.

Like the previous verse, there is a carryover from the first line to the second. We would reasonably precede the second line with *blessings to* or *happinesses to...* This is followed by *people* and the Qal perfect of *bâchar* (בָּחַר) [pronounced *baw-KHAHR*] means *to choose*. Strong's #977 BDB #103. This gives us: *Blessings to the people He has chosen for...* What He has chosen His people *for* is his *nachălâh* (נַחֲלָה) [pronounced *nah-khuh-LAW*], which means *inheritance, possession, property*. Strong's #5159 BDB #635. This is followed by another *lâmed* and the 3rd person singular masculine suffix. This gives us, literally *Blessings to the people He has chosen for a possession for (or, to) Him*. God the Father chose this people Israel as a possession for God the Son. Insofar as I know, only *Young's Literal Translation* renders this literally. Obviously, there is great blessing for the nation whose God is Jehovah and who has been chosen for God the Son. This is one of the few places in this psalm where we actually have a particular nation, the nation Israel. "Now, then, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you will be My own possession among all the peoples, for all the earth is Mine." (Ex. 19:5). And Deut. 7:6: "For you are a holy people to Jehovah your God; Jehovah your God has chosen you to be a people for His own possession out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth." God only chose one nation in the way that He chose Israel, where Israel stood apart from all other nations as a nation under God—it was the only true theocracy in history (a nation ruled by God). We have client nations today, but no theocracies. On the other hand, any nation or any people who place themselves under God's rule will find themselves to be blessed.

Barnes gives four simple reasons why such a nation would be blessed, or happy. First of all, Jehovah God is the True God, the Creator of the Universe. He is not made with the hands of man; he is not some god who is devised by the imagination of man. He is a God of power and substance. Secondly, Israel is blessed or happy because they are under the Law of God, and God, because He is good and because He is perfect, has perfect laws, and these laws would *always tend to promote the public welfare and prosperity*. Third, God's exclusive protection would be afforded to such a nation. And finally, *because his worship, and the influence of his religion, will tend to diffuse virtue, intelligence, purity, and truth, over a land, and thus will promote its welfare*.²¹ As pointed out before, any people who would place themselves under God would find themselves so blessed in these four points.

²⁰ *Barnes' Notes, Volume 4*, F. C. Cook, editor; reprinted 1996 by Baker Books; pp. 281–282.

²¹ Paraphrased and quoted from *Barnes' Notes, Volume 4*, F. C. Cook, editor; reprinted 1996 by Baker Books; p. 282.

From heavens has looked [intently] Y^ehowah; Psalm **Y^ehowah looks [intently] from the heavens;**
He has seen all of [the] sons of the man. 33:13 **He sees all the sons of Adam.**

**Jehovah looks down intently from heaven,
 seeing all of mankind.**

It was well understood to Old Testament believers that God was omniscient. He could see not only our actions, but our thoughts as well. We have two different verbs for *to see* in this verse. The first is the Hiphil perfect of *nâbaṭ* (נָבַט) [pronounced *naw^b-VAHT*], which means *to look intently at, to examine carefully*. When God asked Abraham to look into the sky to count the stars, the word used was *nâbaṭ*. When Lot's wife looked behind to see Sodom, it was not a quick glance, but a look of longing—*nâbaṭ*. In Zech. 12:10, the Israelites are caused to look carefully at something; they examine something with great care and intent. This verb generally occurs in the Hiphil, Isa. 5:30 being the only exception, where it is found in the Piel. Strong's #5027 BDB #613. The second verb is the Qal perfect of the very common *râ`âh* (רָאָה) [pronounced *raw-AWH*], which means *to see, to look*. Strong's #7200 BDB #906. Notice that both verbs are in the perfect tense, which is completed action. Imperfect tense would indicate that God is looking, and looking, and examining, and looking again. Perfect tense indicates that He knew from eternity past each and everything that we would do. He knew it all in an instant. **For He [God] looks to the ends of the earth and sees everything under the heavens** (Job 28:24). **Jehovah has looked down from heaven upon the sons of men to see if there are any who understand or who seek after God** (Psalm 14:2). **For He looked down from His holy height; from heaven, Jehovah gazed upon the earth** (Psalm 102:19). It is verses like these which make it clear that God observes His creation but He is not equivalent to His creation. **Jehovah is in His holy temple; Jehovah's throne is in heaven** (Psalm 11:4a; see also I Kings 8:43 as well as our next verse).

The last phrase is literally *all of [the] sons of the man* or *all of [the] sons of the Adam*. It simply is a reference to all mankind, as well as being somewhat of a play on words. Just as *Xerox* became synonymous with *copying machines*, *Adam* was both a proper name and the name for all of man. **For His eyes are upon the ways of man, and He sees all his steps** (Job 34:21).

Barnes summarizes: *...he sees all that dwell upon the earth, and that therefore all that worship him are under his eye. He knows their wants, and he will watch over them to protect them. It is not merely to the abstract truth that God sees all who dwell upon the earth that the psalmist means to refer; but that those who are his friends, or who worship him, are all under his eye, so as to enjoy his watchful care and attention.*²²

From an established place of His inhabitation, Psalm **From his fixed dwelling place,**
He looks unto all of the inhabitants of the 33:14 **He looks upon all the inhabitants of the earth,**
earth,

**From His royal throne room,
 He looks down upon all those who inhabit the earth;**

David continues with the same theme from v. 13, which is common in Hebrew poetry. Often a thematic element is the poetic aspect of a psalm. We have *from* and the masculine singular construct of *mâkôwn* (מִכּוֹן) [pronounced *maw-KOWN*], which means *fixed, established place, foundation*. Strong's #4349 BDB #467. This is *the foundation of His* Qal infinitive construct of *yâsha^{bv}* (יָשָׁב) [pronounced *yaw-SHAH^{BV}*] and it means *to remain, to inhabit, to sit, to dwell*. Strong's #3427 BDB #442. The Qal infinitive construct presents the simple action of a verbal noun. In a previous verse, we spoke of God's omniscience; here, we have Him in an established place, often called the throne room of God. The NASB renders this *From His dwelling place*; Thieme, *from His throne*; Young, *From the fixed place of His dwelling*; Owen, *from where he sits enthroned*.

Then we have the Hiphil perfect of *shâgach* (שָׁגַח) [pronounced *shaw-GAHKH*], which means *to gaze, to look at*. Strong's #7688 BDB #993. This is followed by the preposition *`el* (אֶל) [pronounced *eI*], which denotes direction

²² Barnes' Notes, Volume 4, F. C. Cook, editor; reprinted 1996 by Baker Books; p. 282.

and means *in, into, toward, unto, to, regarding*. Strong's #413 BDB #39. We have *yâsha^{bv}* again, here in the Qal active participle, masculine plural construct.

What we have is both omniscience, but some separation as well. One of the popular theories of God was that He is in and of everything; that His entire Being is in His creation; however, that is not what this verse, or the Bible, for that matter, teaches. *For the eyes of Jehovah move to and fro throughout the earth that He may strongly support those whose heart is completely His* (II Chron. 16:9a). God simply observes all mankind at all times.

the one fashioning together their hearts, the one perceiving unto all of their deeds.	Psalm 33:15	the [One] fashioning their hearts alike, the [One] considering all of their deeds.
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**He Who, in the same way, formed their hearts;
He Who observes and declares their activities.**

Because the verbs in the Hebrew can be used in a lot of ways, the way this verse was translated is varied in terms of the parts of speech used; to wit:

NASB	He who fashions the hearts of them all, He who understands all their works.
NIV	...he who forms the hearts of all, who considers everything they do.
NJB	...he alone moulds their hearts, he understands all they do.
Owen's Translation	...He who fashions altogether the hearts of them and observes all their deeds.
REB	It is he who fashions the hearts of them all, who discerns everything they do.
<i>Young's Lit. Translation</i>	Who is forming their hearts together, Who is attending unto all their works.

There is no relative pronoun in this verse, nor are there any simple Qal perfects in this verse; in the first line we have the definite article and the Qal active participle of *yâtsar* (אָצַר) [pronounced *yaw-TSAHR*], which means *to form, to mold, to sculpt, to fashion*. Strong's #3335 BDB #427.

Now, let's talk about the concept of a participle: the Qal active participle is often used as a noun, describing a person by what he does or has done. When preceded by a definite article, it refers to a particular person involved in the activity of the verb. Without the definite article, this can be any person involved in the activity of the verb or a reference to simply the activity of the verb alone. Here, we have a definite article, and the information found in this passage points back to God. When preceded by a definite article, a Qal active participle can act like a noun whose function is described by the verb (e.g., the occupation of a person); it can act as a relative pronoun and verbal description, describing actions which can be attributed to the preceding noun (e.g., *in the presence of the witnesses who were subscribing the book of the purchase* in Jer. 32:12); it can behave as an adjective describing a noun in context (e.g., *sinful nation* in Isa. 1:4); and, it can act as a descriptive verbal phrase. This is why several English translations have *He, who fashioned together...* Which brings me to the adverb, which is *yachad* (יָחַד) [pronounced *YAH-khahd*], which means *together, alike, all together*. Strong's #3162 BDB #403. The proper rendering here would be: **[He Who] molds alike their hearts**. The *heart* is often used to refer to the part of the person that we cannot see—their soul, if you will. The psalmist is telling us that God sculpts this unseen material or He fashions it; the adverb *alike*, means that He does it in the same way each time. This is the sculpting—strictly speaking, not the creating—of the soul of man (apart from the old sin nature). *Your hands made me and fashioned me; give me understanding, that I may learn Your commandments* (Psalm 119:73). Job asked of God: *Your hands fashioned and made me altogether—and would You turn me into dust again?* (Job 10:8).

The second line also begins with a definite article and the Hiphil participle of *bîyn* (בִּיַן) [pronounced *bean*], which means *discern, perceive, consider, understand*. In the Hiphil, *bîyn* means (1) *to declare, to explain*; (2) *to perceive, to understand, to discern, to know, to be acquainted with, to turn the mind toward anything*; (3) *to be skilled [in anything]*. Strong's #995 BDB #106. This is followed by the preposition *'el* (אֶל) [pronounced *el*], which denotes direction and means *in, into, toward, unto, to, regarding*. Strong's #413 BDB #39. This preposition occasionally follows this verb and is generally not translated. What God considers and perhaps declares is all their *ma'ăseh*

(הַעֲשֵׂה) [pronounced *mah-ġa-SEH*] and it means *deed, work, production, that which is done*. Strong's #4639 BDB #795. We used this back in v. 4 for what God did, and here it denotes what man has done.

There is a reason for these participles. They denote continuous action. God did not set this world in motion and then walk away. He did not string together a bunch of events that would take place without His hand being actively involved. He fashions or forms the souls of man; he is in constant observance of our activities. Jehovah God is actively a part of our lives.

God, from where He is, has fashioned our souls and, from where He is, He observes all that we do and possibly even declares that aloud. [Jehovah of the armies is His name, Who is great in counsel and strong in deed, whose eyes are open to all the ways of the sons of men, giving to every one according to his ways and according to the fruit of his deeds](#) (Jer. 32:18b–19).

Barnes: *The purpose here is to state the universal sovereignty of God. He made all things; he presides over all things; he sees all things; he is the source of safety and protection to all.*²³

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Human Power Does Not Guarantee Deliverance

**Not the king saved in a multitude of an army,
a soldier not delivered in a multitude of
strength.**

Psalm
33:16

**The king is not saved by a large army,
nor a warrior rescued by great strength.**

**No king is delivered by a large army,
nor can a soldier deliver himself by his great strength.**

In poetry, we have a different sort of association of ideas than we do in prose. There are times, to some, where it seems as though we jump from topic to topic, almost like free associating; and others read the same passage, and there is a flow that they see. We have gone from the creation of the earth (v. 6a) to a discussion of a king and his armed forces. Such a jump, in itself, does not seem to make sense. However, God first created the heavens and all their hosts (which would include the earth—v. 6); God separated the land from the sea on earth (as well as separated the waters themselves—v. 7); because of this great power, man is to have a reverential respect for God (v. 8), as God simply would speak, and it would come to pass (v. 9). Not only does this apply to His original creative and restorative acts, but also to the day-to-day affairs of mankind (v. 10), and His choices stand forever (v. 11). A nation which recognizes God's power and sovereignty, as well as His involvement in their day-to-day lives, is blessed (v. 12). Given that all of this is His creation, and that He has this day-to-day involvement in our lives, God therefore obviously must be observing all of mankind (vv 13–14). God understands man, as He created man's soul (v. 15). Given God's sovereignty and his involvement with man, it is therefore obvious that not even a king is protected or delivered by his army, which brings us to this verse.

It is because of vv. 16–17 that I placed this psalm after Abraham's great victory which freed Lot. We begin this verse with the negative substantive 'ayin (אֵין) [pronounced *AH-yin*], which means *naught, nothing*; or it can be used as a particle of negation; *no, not*. Strong's #369 BDB #34. The reason that this word is found first in the sentence is to give it great emphasis. Then we have *the king* and the Niphal participle of *yâsha'* (יָשַׁע) [pronounced *yaw-SHAHQ*], which means *to deliver, to save*. Strong's #3467 BDB #446. Then we have the masculine singular construct of *rôḇ* (רֹב) [pronounced *roh^b*], which means *multitude, abundance, greatness*. Strong's #7230 BDB #913. What follows is the masculine singular noun *chayil* (חַיִל) [pronounced *CHAH-yil*] and it means *efficiency, army, strength, valour, power, might*. Strong's #2428 BDB #298. *The king is not delivered by a multitude of an army.*

²³ Barnes' Notes, Volume 4, F. C. Cook, editor; reprinted 1996 by Baker Books; p. 283.

The next person mentioned is a gibbôwr (גִּבּוֹר) [pronounced *gib-BOAR*], which means *strong men, mighty men, soldiers*. In the singular, it means *strong man, mighty man, soldier, warrior, combatant, soldier, veteran*. Strong's #1368 BDB #150. Then we have the Niphal imperfect of nâtsal (נָצַל) [pronounced *naw-TSAHL*], which means *to deliver [from], to rescue, to recover*. With the Niphal, we may not have strictly the passive sense, but the idea of the subject acting on his own behalf (Rotherham and God's Word™ both recognized that). Strong's #5337 BDB #664. Then we have a repeat of rô^bv and the masculine singular noun kôach (כֹּחַ) [pronounced *KOE-ahkh*], which means *strength, power, ability*. Strong's #3581 BDB #470. It is interesting that at least one translation (the NLT) renders the two different verbs the same, yet translates the exact same masculine nouns differently. Most of the translations render the first verb *save* and the second verb *deliver*. I only found one translation (the NEB) which rendered the repeated noun the same way each time. The simple message is that God is in control of all victories and defeats. *O give us help against the adversary, for deliverance by man is in vain. Through God we will do valiantly, and it is He Who will tread down our adversaries (Psalm 60:11–12). You are my King, O God. Command victories for Jacob. Through You, we will push back our adversaries; through Your name, we will trample down those who rise up against us. For I will not trust in my bow, nor will my sword save me, but You have saved us from our adversaries and You have put to shame those who hate us. Therefore, in God, we have boasted all day long, and we will give thanks to Your name forever (Psalm 44:4–8).*

Barnes: *[A king's]...safety, however numerous and might may be his forces, is in God alone. He is the great protector, whatever means men may use to defend themselves. The most numerous and the best organized armies cannot secure a victory. It is, after all, wholly in the hands of God. A wasting sickness in a camp may defeat all the plans of war; or success in battle may depend on contingencies which no commander could anticipate or provide against. A mutiny in a camp, or a panic on the battle-field, may disconcert the best-laid schemes; or forces may come against an army that were unexpected; or storm and tempest may disarrange and frustrate the entire plan of the campaign.*²⁴

McGee, who always makes it simple: *Napoleon said that God is on the side of the greatest battalion, but he demonstrated he was wrong, because at the battle of Waterloo, Napoleon had the greatest battalion, but he lost. God is not on the side of the one who has the biggest bomb, either.*²⁵

**A falsehood the horse for deliverance,
and in a multitude of his strength he cannot
save.**

Psalm
33:17

**The horse is a false thing for deliverance,
and by an abundance of his strength he
cannot deliver [himself].**

**The horse cannot be depended upon for safety,
and even with superhuman strength, he cannot deliver himself.**

We begin this verse with the masculine singular noun sheqer (שֶׁקֶר) [pronounced *SHEH-ker*], which means *a deception, a disappointment, a falsehood*. Barnes is even stronger and calls it *a lie*. Strong's #8267 BDB #1054. Depending entirely upon one's own resources is a personal deception, a disappointment and a falsehood. What is a false hope is the masculine singular noun çûwç (סוּחַ) [pronounced *soos*], which means *horse*. Strong's #5483 BDB #692. What the horse is a falsehood for is t^eshûw'âh (תְּשׁוּבָה) [pronounced *t^e-shoo-GAW*], which means *deliverance, salvation*. Strong's #8668 BDB #448. This is our third word for *deliverance* or *salvation* in the past three verses. In the ancient world, if a battle was going badly, a soldier could simply hop on his horse and ride to safety. The psalmist tells us that this is not the case here.

In the second line we have the masculine singular construct of rô^bv (רֹב) [pronounced *roh^bv*] again, which means *multitude, abundance, greatness*. Strong's #7230 BDB #913. Rô^bv has occurred three times in the past two verses, and you might find it interesting to see how the various translations have dealt with this:

²⁴ Barnes' Notes, Volume 4, F. C. Cook, editor; reprinted 1996 by Baker Books; p. 283.

²⁵ J. Vernon McGee, *Psalms Volume 1*; Thru the Bible Books, ©1977, p. 174.

Rô ^b v	v. 16a	v. 16b	v. 17
<i>The Amplified Bible</i>	great size <i>and</i> power [of his army]	much [strength]	great [power]
KJV	multitude [of a host]	much [strength]	great [strength]
NASB	mighty [army]	great [strength]	great [strength]
NEB	great [army]	great [strength]	[all its strength]
NIV	size [of his army]	great [strength]	great [strength]
NRSV	great [army]	great [strength]	great [might]
Tanakh	large [force]	great [strength]	great [power]
<i>Young's Literal Translation</i>	multitude [of a force]	abundance [of power]	abundance [of strength]

I place this chart here to show you how difficult a word-for-word translation is. In several translations (the CEV, the NEB) did not even translate rô^bv in v. 17. Only the NRSV was consistent, and it had to render this substantive construct as an adjective in order to make it work. Again, in this verse, it is *a multitude of strength, an abundance of power, great might*. By this *great might* it cannot mâlaṭ (וּלְחַד) [pronounced *maw-LAHT*], which means *to slip away, to slip through, to slip past, to escape*. Here, this verb is in the Piel imperfect (it is only found in the Niphal and the Piel). Strong's #4422 BDB #572.

Now, let's look at a similar word study; we have four different verbs which could all be rendered *to save, to deliver*. Let's see how others dealt with this:

Hebrew Word	yâsha ^ʿ	nâtsal	t ^ʿ shûw ^ʿ âh	mâlaṭ
Meanings:	verb: <i>to deliver, to save</i>	verb: <i>to deliver, to rescue, to recover</i>	noun: <i>deliverance, salvation</i>	verb: <i>to slip away, to slip through, to slip past, to escape</i>
Morphology:	Niphal (passive) participle	Niphal (passive) imperfect	Feminine singular	Piel (intensive) imperfect
<i>The Amplified Bible</i>	saved	delivered	victory	deliver
KJV	saved	delivered	safety	deliver
NASB	saved	delivered	victory	deliver
NEB	saved	delivered	to save	delivered
NIV	saved	escapes	deliverance	save
NRSV	saved	delivered	victory	save
Tanakh	delivered	saved	deliverance	provide [no] escape
<i>Young's Literal Translation</i>	saved	delivered	safety	doth [not] deliver

You will note that, although we have some consistency between the various translations on the first two words, in almost every case, the verbs are rendered as a perfect rather imperfect tenses; and in only a few of the cases of the third verb do we have an imperfect tense translated as an imperfect tense (i.e., ongoing action as opposed to completed action). To be fair, what is meant is that these things cannot be depended upon at any time—it is continuous that these things do not deliver. We would understand that in the perfect tense, as we are dealing with a negative.

Some boast in chariots, and some in horses; but we will boast in the name of Jehovah, our God. They have bowed down and fallen, but we have risen and stood upright. Jehovah has delivered—may the King answer us in the day we call (Psalm 20:7–9). The horse is prepared for the day of battle, but victory belongs to Jehovah (Prov. 21:31). The sense is not to neglect strategy and tactics in battle, or to forsake one's military assets. That is a misunderstanding and a misapplication of this verse. The idea is that the ultimate Determiner of victory is God. We cannot place our faith upon anything else.

As before, Barnes lists so many of the variables: *[The horse]...is liable to be stricken down, or to become wild and furious so as to be beyond the control of his rider; and, however strong or fleet he may be, or however well he may be "broken," yet none of these things make it certain that the rider will be safe.*²⁶

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God's Salvation and Grace Is Based upon Our Trust in Him

**Behold, an eye²⁷ of Y^ehowah unto those
revering Him,
to the ones having trust to His grace;**

Psalm
33:18

**Observe, the eye of Y^ehowah [is] upon those
who respect [and revere] Him;
[the eye of Y^ehowah] [is] to those having
confidence in His grace;**

**Note that the eyes of Jehovah are upon those who respect and revere Him;
they are upon those who place their confidence in His grace—**

Like some of the previous verses, a portion of the first line may be repeated in the second; i.e., we may repeat *the eye of Jehovah* in the second line. His eye is first upon the masculine plural, Qal active participle of *yârê'* (אָרַי) [pronounced *yaw-RAY*] means *to fear, to fear-respect, to reverence, to have a reverential respect*. You will note that we have many of the same words repeated throughout this psalm. Strong's #3372 BDB #431.

In the second line, we have the definite article and the masculine plural, Piel participle of *yâchal* (לָחַל) [pronounced *yaw-KHAHL*], which means *wait* in the Niphal and *await, to expect* in the Piel. Keil and Delitzsch point out that this does not mean *to hope*. Implicit in the meaning of this verb is the idea of *trust*; one waits because he has trust in the one he is waiting for. It is confidence which is being emphasized here. The lamed tells us what the subject is waiting for or expecting or hoping for. Strong's #3176 BDB #403. What they have confidence in is His *cheçed* (חֶסֶד) [pronounced *KHEH-sed*], which means *grace, benevolence, mercy, kindness*. Strong's #2617 BDB #338.

God's eye being upon someone is connected to guidance in Psalm 32:8. His eyes being on the righteous is related to prayer and cries for help in Psalm 34:15 (which Peter quotes in I Peter 3:12). Here, it appears to be on those who trust in Him for protection and, in battle, victory. Barnes: *He watches over them, and he guards them from danger. His eye is, in fact, upon all men; but it is directed with special attention to those who fear him and trust in him. Their security is in the fact that the eye of God is upon them; that he knows their wants; that he sees their dangers; that he has ample ability to deliver and save them.*²⁸

²⁶ Barnes' Notes, Volume 4, F. C. Cook, editor; reprinted 1996 by Baker Books; p. 283.

²⁷ Plural in the Septuagint, Syriac and Vulgate codices. This could have been based more upon the differences in the languages rather than a more correct translation.

²⁸ Barnes' Notes, Volume 4, F. C. Cook, editor; reprinted 1996 by Baker Books; pp. 283–284

**to deliver from death their soul
and to keep them alive in the famine**

Psalm
33:19

**to deliver their souls from death,
and to keep them alive in famine.**

**He both delivers their souls from death
and He keeps them alive during famines.**

We finally do *not* have another Hebrew synonym for *deliver*, but this is the Hiphil infinitive of *nâtsal* again, which is נָצַל [pronounced *naw-TSAHL*], and means *to deliver [from], to rescue, to recover*. It is not found in the Qal. Strong's #5337 BDB #664. The deliverance is extended to, literally, *their soul from death*. The word for *soul* can also mean *life*. Peter, after being arrested and then delivered from that arrest, said, "**Now I certainly know that the Lord has sent forth His angel and he rescued me from the hand of Herod and from all that the Jewish people were expecting.**" (Acts 12:11b). David also wrote of being delivered from death in Psalm 56 (specifically in v. 13), when he was brought before the Philistine ruler of Gath.

The second line is somewhat unexpected. We have the Piel infinitive construct (with a 3rd person masculine plural suffix) of *châyâh* (חַיָּה) [pronounced *khaw-YAW*], which means, *to live, to have life, to revive, to recover health, to be healed, to be refreshed*. In the Piel, it means, ❶ *to cause to live, to make alive*; ❷ *to keep alive*; ❸ *to call back to life; to restore life*. Strong's #2421 & 2425 BDB #310. This is followed by *in the famine*. We have gone from war to famine; and God preserves during famine. Eliphaz correctly said, "**He will redeem you from death in famine; and in war, from the power of the sword.**" (Job 5:20). When considering the righteous in another psalm, David wrote, **And in the days of famine, they will enjoy abundance** (Psalm 37:19b). Because Israel was an agricultural society, it was particularly vulnerable to drought, which resulted in famine. What it was then is nothing like what it is today. From all the indications in Scripture, it was a beautiful, well-watered land which suffered from drought now and again as discipline from God. In more recent history, it appears to be in a long-term state of drought, and the only reason they are not under a severe depression is because of foreign aid.

**Our soul waits for Y^howah,
our help and our shield, He [is];**

Psalm
33:20

**Our souls wait upon Y^howah—
He [is] our help and our shield;**

**Our souls wait upon Jehovah,
Who is our help and our shield;**

What our soul does is the Piel perfect of *châkâh* (חָכַח) [pronounced *khaw-KAWH*], and it means *to wait, to wait with anticipation, to long for*. The latter meanings are apropos when followed by the lamed preposition, which is what we have here. Strong's #2442 BDB #314. Our very life, our very being waits for Jehovah. There are several factors at play here. First off, God has a correct table which does not always match ours. We tend to be rather impatient. Many times, we must give God time to act or allow Him to act at the correct time. That involves waiting, which is patience and trust, two virtues of the soul. Depending upon what we are waiting for, it might also involve self-discipline or self-control. **Wait for Jehovah; be strong and let your heart take courage. Yes, wait for Jehovah** (Psalm 27:14).

There is another, very different idea behind the waiting upon God which we find in the Old Testament. God was sending to Israel their Redeemer, their Messiah, the One Who would lead them. God, in His Word, asks Israel to wait for Him as well. In the New Testament, we are asked to wait upon His second coming for the restoration of all things. God has a perfect time; for us, we might think that perfect time would be a millisecond after we have been saved—however, our concept of time is completely ego-centric. One of the points that this psalmist is making is that God knows all; He observes all; He is a God of awesome power;²⁹ therefore, we should wait upon Him and His timetable.

Then God is described as the masculine singular of *‘ezer* (עֲזֵר) [pronounced *ĠAY-zer*], which means *help*. This is the word used to describe the woman in the garden with respect to Adam. Here, it is applied to God.

²⁹ That is, God is omniscient, omnipresent and omnipotent.

Strong's #5828 BDB #740. God is also the *shield* for us, indicating His protection as well as His help. This verse ends with the 3rd person, personal pronoun, which often demands the use of the verb *to be*. The concept of His being our shield is that *He will defend us from our enemies, as if he threw his shield between us and them.*³⁰

We find a similar sentiment expressed in Psalm 62:1–2a: *My soul waits in silence for God only; from His is my salvation. He only is my rock and my salvation.* Also, Psalm 115:9: *O Israel, trust in Jehovah, He is their help and their shield.*

**for in Him rejoices our heart
for in a name His holy we trust.**

Psalm
33:21

**for our heart rejoices in Him,
because we have trusted in His holy name.**

**for our heart rejoices in Him,
because we have trusted in His holy name.**

The first verb is the Qal imperfect of *sâmach* (נִשְׂמַח) [pronounced *saw-MAHKH*], and it means *to rejoice, to be glad*. Strong's #8055 BDB #970. David derives his happiness, as well should we all, in Jehovah, his God. When Jesus told his disciples of His impending crucifixion, He said, *“Therefore, you too now have sorrow; however, I will see you again and your heart will rejoice, and no one will take your joy away from you.”* (John 16:22).

We have the explanatory preposition and the Qal perfect of the verb *bâtach* (בָּטַח) [pronounced *baw-TAHKH*], which means *to trust, to rely upon, to have confidence in, to be secure in*. Strong's #982 BDB #105. Note the forms of the verbs. The first verb is in the imperfect, meaning that this is a verb not viewed from its final state of completion, but as a process. Our rejoicing in Him is a process which starts and stops, starts and stops; it is closely allied with our faith. However, the trusting—that is in the perfect tense—that is a completed action. Now, we all know that in reality, our faith is strong, then its weak; we believe, then we doubt. However, David presents this from the standpoint of completion—when we trust in His holy name, that is a final, completed process. This is, quite simply, Old Testament salvation. In the New Testament, it is *believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved*; in the Old, it is *trust in His holy name*. Psalm 13:5: *I have trusted in Your grace; my heart will rejoice in Your salvation.*

The fact that we have simply put our trust in God is a cause for rejoicing; and that the results and outgrowth of placing our trust in God will also be a cause for rejoicing.³¹

McGee: *When we trust in the name of God, our hearts will rejoice. May I make a suggestion? Why don't you saturate yourself with the psalms? Instead of running around attending all of the conferences which tell you about new methods of running the Sunday School, running the church or doing this or that, why don't you stay home and read the psalms? When you are saturated with this portion of God's Word, it not only will bring comfort to your heart, it will solve 99.4 per cent of the problems of the church. Oh, that it might become meaningful to you personally and be translated into shoe leather? This is a rich area of the Word of God.*³²

**Let be Your grace, O Y^ehowah, upon us,
as which we have waited [with confidence] in
You.**

Psalm
33:22

**Let Your grace be upon us, O Y^ehowah,
according as we have placed confidence in
You.**

**Let Your grace be upon us, O Jehovah,
just as we have placed our confidence in You.**

We have a change in voice with this verse, which occurs occasionally in Scripture. Throughout this psalm, the psalmist has referred to God in the 3rd person, and in this concluding verse, he speaks to God directly. This is

³⁰ *Barnes' Notes, Volume 4*, F. C. Cook, editor; reprinted 1996 by Baker Books; p. 284.

³¹ Paraphrased from *Barnes' Notes, Volume 4*, F. C. Cook, editor; reprinted 1996 by Baker Books; p. 284.

³² J. Vernon McGee, *Psalms Volume 1*; Thru the Bible Books, ©1977, pp. 174–175.

actually called an apostrophe, which means *to turn aside from the subject matter and address another*. It is made up of the Greek word *away from* and *to turn*.³³

Again, in this verse, we have an imperfect verb followed by a perfect. In other words, we have an ongoing action based upon a completed action. Again, this is exactly what we would expect: our salvation is based upon trust in Him. The first verb is the apocopated Qal imperfect of *to be*; the apocopated means that we should appropriately add the word *let*. What David asks for is God's grace to be upon them.

This is followed by the kaph preposition and the relative pronoun: *ka`asher* (כַּאֲשֶׁר) [pronounced *kah-uh-SHER*], is the compound of the preposition kaph (כ) (No Strong's # BDB #453), which, means *like, as*; and the relative pronoun `asher (אֲשֶׁר) [pronounced *uh-SHER*] (Strong's #834 BDB #81), which means *which, that, when* or *who*. Together, literally, we have *as which*; however, it means *as which, as one who, as, like as, just as*. BDB classifies these two together as a separate word, and gives the meanings *according as, as, when*. Gesenius does likewise, giving the meanings *as who, as one who, according to [that] which, according as, according to what manner, because*. Together they = Strong's #834 BDB #455.

The second verb is the Piel perfect of *yâchal* (יָחַל) [pronounced *yaw-KHAHL*], which means *to expect, to wait in [or, with] trust and confidence, to hope in, to place one's confidence in, to trust in*. Strong's #3176 BDB #403. Again, just as with the previous verse, David asks for God's grace (a continuous action) based upon the trust and confidence that he has placed in God (a completed action). It is true that salvation in the Old Testament is more difficult to root out than salvation in the New—and there is a very good reason for that—however, whenever we come across it, it is clear that salvation is always a completed action—faith in His holy name—followed by continuous blessings.

Barnes correlates the blessings and grace from God to be in accordance with our faith. He gives four points: (a) *it is but reasonable that we should look for the favour of God only as we trust in him, for we could not with propriety expect his favour beyond the measure of our confidence in him.* (b) *This may be regarded as the most that we are entitled to hope from God. We have no reason to suppose that he will go beyond our wishes and prayers, or that he will confer favours on us which we neither expect nor desire.* (c) *One of the reasons why the people of God are no more blessed, or why they receive no more favours from him, may be found in what is here suggested. As they expect little, they obtain little; as they have no intense, burning, lofty desire for the favour of God, either for themselves personally, or for their families, or for the world, so they obtain but slight tokens of that favour.* (d) *The true principle, therefore, on which God is willing to bestow his favours, and which will be the rule that he will observe, is, that if men desire much, they will obtain much; that if they have large expectations, they will not be disappointed; and that God is willing to bestow his mercies on his people and on the world to the utmost of their desires and hopes. Compare Ps. lxxxi. 10, "Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it." Ps. xxxvii. 4, "Delight thyself in the Lord, and he shall give thee the desires of thy heart." How intense and fervent, then, should be the prayers and the petitions of the people of God! How earnest the supplications of sinners that God would have mercy on them!*³⁴

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Keil and Delitzsch correctly divide this psalm into an introduction, a conclusion, divided by eight tetrastichs. When viewed in this way, the psalm itself divides up nicely in terms of topics. However, it is difficult to see that apart from reading the psalm as a whole. Therefore, allow me to present the psalm as it would be read.

Moderately literal	comments	More literary than literal
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³³ Such a figure of speech is also called a *prospheosis*. *Figures of Speech Used in the Bible*; E. W. Bullinger; ©originally 1898; reprinted 1968 Baker Books; p 901.

³⁴ *Barnes' Notes, Volume 4*, F. C. Cook, editor; reprinted 1996 by Baker Books; pp. 284–285.

<p>Celebrate [by shouting], righteous ones in Yehowah, the upright ones—[celebrate with] beautiful praise. Give thanks to God with a lyre and with stringed instruments; make music of praise to Him! Sing a new song to Him; Play skillfully [on stringed instruments] with a loud shout.</p>	<p>Vv. 1–3: The psalmist calls for those within his periphery to sing praises to God.</p>	<p>Shout out, you righteous ones in Jehovah; Praise sounds exquisite to the upright! Give thanks to God using musical instruments; make music that praises Him! Sing a new song to Him; Play skillfully on a stringed instrument, accompanied with loud shouts.</p>
<p>For the Word of Yehowah [is] accurate [and faithful to the truth] and all of His work [is] dependable. Loving righteousness and justice, the land is filled with the grace of Yehowah.</p>	<p>Vv. 4–5: God’s Word and His works reflect His character of righteousness and justice</p>	<p>For the Word of Jehovah is accurate and all that He does can be depended upon. God continually loves righteousness and justice, and the land finds itself filled with the grace of Jehovah.</p>
<p>By the word of Yehowah were the heavens made, and by the breath of His mouth, all their hosts. Gathering the waters of the sea into a mass, placing the subterranean oceans into storage areas.</p>	<p>Vv. 6–7: Jehovah’s creation reveals His great and awesome power</p>	<p>By the word of Jehovah were the heavens made, and by the breath of His mouth were the stars of the heavens constructed. Gathering the waters of the sea into masses, placing the subterranean oceans into storage places.</p>
<p>All the earth will fear Yehowah, all of the inhabitants of the world will stand in awe on account of Him. For He spoke, and then it was; He commanded, and it endured.</p>	<p>Vv. 8–9: Jehovah’s tremendous power demands our reverence.</p>	<p>Let all of the earth fear Jehovah, and all of the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of Him. For He spoke, and then it came to pass; He commanded, and it remains.</p>
<p>Yehowah makes void the wisdom of [Gentile] nations, He stands in opposition to the plans of people. The counsel of Yehowah endures forever, and the thoughts of His heart [endure] from generation to generation.</p>	<p>Vv. 10–11: Man’s wisdom and plans cannot stand in opposition to God. What He does is eternal.</p>	<p>Jehovah brings to nothing the wisdom and counsel of heathen nations, and He frustrates the plans and purposes of the heathen. The advice and counsel of Jehovah endures forever; the thoughts of His heart also endure throughout all generations.</p>
<p>Happiness to the nation whose God is Yehowah; [happiness to] the people He has chosen for His own possession. Yehowah looks [intently] from the heavens; He sees all the sons of Adam.</p>	<p>Vv. 12–13: Happiness is to those who trust in Jehovah. He watches over all mankind.</p>	<p>Happiness to the nation whose God is Jehovah; and happiness to the people whom He has chosen for his own. Jehovah looks down intently from heaven, seeing all of mankind.</p>

<p>From his fixed dwelling place, He looks upon all the inhabitants of the earth, the [One] fashioning their hearts alike, the [One] considering all of their deeds.</p>	<p>Vv. 14–15: God designs the soul of man; He is in constant observation of man.</p>	<p>From His royal throne room, He looks down upon all those who inhabit the earth; He, who, in the same way, formed their hearts; He Who observes and declares their activities.</p>
<p>The king is not saved by a large army, nor a warrior rescued by great strength. The horse is a false thing for deliverance, and by an abundance of strength he cannot deliver [himself].</p>	<p>Vv. 16–17: Kings and nations are not protected by their armies or their tremendous strength.</p>	<p>No king is delivered by a large army, nor can a soldier deliver himself by his great strength. The horse cannot be depended upon for safety, and even with superhuman strength, he cannot deliver himself.</p>
<p>Observe, the eye of Yehowah [is] upon those who respect [and revere] Him; [the eye of Yehowah] [is] to those having confidence in His grace; to deliver their souls from death, and to keep them alive in famine.</p>	<p>Vv. 18–19: God observes and protects those who belong to Him.</p>	<p>Note that the eyes of Jehovah are upon those who respect and revere Him; they are upon those who place their confidence in His grace— He both delivers their souls from death and He keeps them alive during famines.</p>
<p>Our souls wait upon Yehowah— He [is] our help and our shield; for our heart rejoices in Him, because we have trusted in His holy name. Let Your grace be upon us, O Yehowah, according as we have placed confidence in You.</p>	<p>Vv. 20–22: Those who are His wait for Him and ask for His grace to be upon them.</p>	<p>Our souls wait upon Jehovah, Who is our help and our shield; for our heart rejoices in Him, because we have trusted in His holy name. Let Your grace be upon us, O Jehovah, just as we have placed our confidence in You.</p>

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