

TEOLOGIA

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“I WILL BLESS YHWH IN EVERY TIME”: THE COMPOSITION OF PSALM 34

The composition of Psalm 34 has been the subject of a variety of interpretations¹. This examination will indicate in form and content that the psalm is a literarily unified poem. In particular, I will sustain the hypothesis of a tripartite composition of Psalm 34.²

In the paragraphs which follow the translation of Psalm 34, this general assumption will be discussed at length. It will be seen that v. 1, a historical title (cf. 1 Sam 21:11-16), was added later to the original text.

¹ For a list with different proposals for the structure of Psalm 34, see P. van der Lugt, *Strofische structuren in de Bijbels-Hebreeuwse poëzie*. De geschiedenis van het onderzoek en een bijdrage tot de theorievorming omtrent de strofenbouw van de Psalmen (DNL.T; Kampen 1980) 249.

² Thus e.g. C. A. & E. G. Briggs, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Psalms I* (ICC; Edinburgh 1907) 294; E. J. Kissane, *The Book of Psalms I* (Psalms 1-72) (Dublin 1953) 147-148; J. Bazak, "Structural Geometric Patterns in Biblical Poetry," *Poetics Today* 6 (1985) 483-485, quoted in L. O. Eriksson, "Come, Children, Listen to Me!" Psalm 34 in the Hebrew Bible and in Early Christian Writings (CB.OT 32; Uppsala 1991) 51-52, vv. 2-8, 9-15, 16-23. Other scholars also opt for different solutions. The psalm is divided in four units by, e.g., L. J. Lebreich, "Psalms 34 and 145 in the Light of Their Key Words," *HUCA* 27 (1956) 183 (vv. 2-4, 5-11, 12-15, 16-23); N. H. Ridderbos, *Die Psalmen* (BZAW 117; Berlin 1972) 245-251 (vv. 2-4, 5-9, 10-15, 16-23); P. Auffret, *Hymnes d'Égypte et d'Israël*. Études de structures littéraires (OBO 34; Fribourg - Göttingen 1981) 76-91 (vv. 2-4, 5-8, 9-15, 16-23). Instead, P. W. Gaebelain Jr., "Psalm 34 and Other Biblical Acrostics. Evidence from the Aleppo Codex," *Maarav* 5/6 (1990) 130-143, opts for two parts, vv. 2-8, pre-exilic (dealing with facts of the life of David, which are mentioned in the superscript) and vv. 9-23, post-exilic (of a sapiential nature).

1. Structured Translation of Psalm 34

The English translation of the psalm (see below) follows closely the Hebrew text in order to highlight the structural and semantic relationships.

2. The first part (vv. 2-8)

The first part is divided in two subparts.³ The first of these invites one to praise (vv. 2-4),⁴ whereas the second, without an initial *kî* (cf. Pss 66:6; 138:3), offers the motivation (vv. 5-8).⁵

<i>Aleph</i>	² I will bless Yhwh in every time, continually his praise in my MOUTH.
<i>Beth</i>	³ In Yhwh may make my SOUL boast, May the humble HEAR and be glad.
<i>Gimel</i>	⁴ Magnify Yhwh with me, that we exalt his name together.
<i>Daleth</i> ⁵	I consulted Yhwh and he ANSWERED me, and FROM ALL MY TERRORS he SNATCHED me AWAY.
<i>He</i>	⁶ They looked at him and were enlightened, and their FACES shall never be ashamed.
<i>Zain</i>	⁷ This poor one cried and Yhwh HEARD and FROM ALL HIS DISTRESS he SAVED him.
<i>Heth</i>	⁸ PITCHED-A-CAMP the messenger of Yhwh around THOSE WHO FEAR him and LIBERATED them.

<i>Teth</i>	⁹ Taste and see since Yhwh (is) GOOD. Happy the man who takes refuge in him.
<i>Yod</i>	¹⁰ FEAR Yhwh. O his saints, since there is no lack for THOSE WHO FEAR him.
<i>Kaph</i>	¹¹ Young lions suffered want and were hungry, but those who consult Yhwh did not lack any GOOD.
<i>Lamed</i>	¹² Come, sons, HEAR ME: the FEAR of Yhwh I will teach you.
<i>Mem</i>	¹³ Who (is) the man delighting in life, loving days for seeing GOOD?
<i>Nun</i>	¹⁴ Guard your TONGUE from EVIL and your LIPS from pronouncing treachery.
<i>Samekh</i>	¹⁵ Turn from EVIL and DO GOOD, search for peace and pursue it.

³ In this article, use will be made of the rhetorical terminology of R. Meynet, *Rhetorical Analysis. An Introduction to Biblical Rhetoric* (JSOT.S 256; Sheffield 1998).

⁴ It is a hymnal introduction; cf. F. Delitzsch, *Biblischer Kommentar über die Psalmen* (BC 4/1; Leipzig 1894) 272; A. Weiser, *Die Psalmen* (ATD 14; Göttingen - Zürich 1987) 200.

⁵ H. Venema, *Commentarius ad Psalmos II* (XXII-XLI) (Leovardiae 1764) 405; Weiser, *Psalmen*, 200.

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Ayin	¹⁶ The EYES of Yhwh (are) toward the just, and his EARS (are) toward their cry.
Pe	¹⁷ The FACE of Yhwh against the <i>DOERS</i> of <i>EVIL</i> . to CUT OFF from the earth their remembrance.
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Sade	¹⁸ They cried and Yhwh <i>HEARD</i> . FROM ALL THEIR DISTRESSES he SNATCHED them AWAY.
Qof	¹⁹ Close (is) Yhwh to the broken-HEARTED and those crushed in SPIRIT he SAVES.
Resh	²⁰ Many (are) the <i>EVILS</i> of the just man and FROM ALL OF THEM Yhwh SNATCHES him AWAY.
Shin	²¹ He WATCHES over all his BONES, not one of them will be broken.
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Taw	²² <i>EVIL</i> kills the wicked man, and the haters of the just man pay the penalty. ²³ Yhwh is RANSOMING LIFE of his servants, and those will not pay a penalty <i>who take refuge in him</i> .

Verbs of praise/thanksgiving are distinctively phrased in the first subpart ("I will bless." v. 2a; "hoast." v. 3a; "be glad." v. 3b; "magnify." v. 4a; "that we exalt." v. 4b). The community (cf. "together, v. 4b) is about to accomplish a festive act of worship.

The second subpart quotes, by means of the evocation of past events (for the verbs in the past tense), the explanation for this two-fold performance in two pieces (v. 5; vv. 6-8). In the first, an individual, the pray-er⁶ in the first person, recalls the salvation Yhwh gave to him; in the second piece, this same divine aid is mentioned, but it is provided for a group of humble people (v. 3b), or of those who fear God (cf. v. 8b). These pieces develop according to similar dynamics: the man turns to God ("I consulted." v. 5a; "they looked." v. 6a; "[he] cried." v. 7a) and experiences Yhwh's help ("he answered," v. 5a; "he snatched away," v. 5b; "[they] shall never be ashamed." v. 6b; "[he] heard," v. 7a; "[he] saved," v. 7b; cf. "[they] were enlightened." v. 6a). V. 8 differs slightly from vv. 5-7, since in describing the help of God given by his angel,⁷ it does not mention the human request to Yhwh. Perhaps because the verse concludes this part, the verse is intended to emphasize the predominant role of the Lord.

⁶ Found in B. Sudol, *Elements of Mysticism in the Poetry of T. S. Eliot* (Diss. St. John's University; New York 2001).

⁷ The wayyiqtol way⁶ *hāll šēm* (v. 8b) indicates that it is a matter of a past action and, consequently, the same temporal value should be conferred also on the participle *hōneh* (v. 8a); cf. W. Groß, *Verbform und Funktion wayyiqtol für Gegenwart?* (ATSAT 1; St. Ottilien 1976) 117. Then the verb *hls Pi* means "to draw out," "to save," "to liberate," from a peril or from an enemy (cf. Pss 6:5; 18:20; 50:15; 81:8; 119:153; etc.).

3. The second part (vv. 9-15)

After a series of verbs in past tense (vv. 5-8), some imperatives reappear (vv. 9, 10) which mark the beginning of a new part. As in the previous part, this part is composed of two subparts (vv. 9-11; vv. 12-15) which have in common the theme of the fear of God (cf. vv. 10, 12). Each subpart starts with an imperative of the second plural addressed to different persons. The double imperative "taste and see" in v. 9a probably has as its subject "his saints" (v. 10a) or "those who fear him" (v. 10b, cf. v. 8b), whereas the term "sons" is a subject of "come" and "hear me" in v. 12a.

The first subpart, which exhorts one to fear Yhwh (v. 10a), is of a liturgical character. V. 9 invites one to the experience of God ("taste," "see"), and to take refuge in his protection;⁸ v. 11b makes a reference to the liturgical questioning of Yhwh.

The second subpart focuses on the knowledge of the fear of Yhwh (v. 12b) and is shaped by two pieces of a sapiential nature (v. 12; vv. 13-15). In the first piece, the pray-er as a pedagogue enunciates his willingness to impart to his disciples a teaching about the fear of God, while in the second piece, he utters his lesson in two moments: a question (v. 13) and an answer (vv. 14-15). Apart from the terms "sons" (Prov 4:1; 5:7; 8:32; etc.), "hear/listen" (Prov 4:1, 10; 5:7; 7:24; etc.), "I will teach you" ("the fear of Yhwh;" cf. Ps 111:10; Job 28:28; Prov 1:7-8; 2:5; 8:13; 16:6; etc.), there are other wisdom motives, such as keeping the tongue from evil (v. 14; cf. Prov 4:24; 13:3; 21:23), renouncing evil to follow good (v. 15; cf. Isa 1:16-17; Job 28:28; Prov 3:7; 13:19; 16:6), and the question "who (is) the man?" (v. 13a; cf. Pss 25:12; 89:49). Although of a different form (liturgical, sapiential), the two subparts are not separated. There exists a semantic bond established by the repetition of the words: "to see," "to fear" - the roots r^{sh} - yr^{sh} || yr^{sh} - r^{sh} alternate chiasmically (v. 9a - v. 10a || v. 12b - v. 13b), by the term *tôb*, "good" reiterated four times (vv. 9a, 11b, 13b, 15a), and by the double mention of the man (*haggeber*, v. 9b; *hā'îš*, v. 13a).

4. The third part (vv. 16-23)

In this descriptive part, imperatives occurring previously are absent (vv. 9, 10, 12, 14, 15). The part starts with three nominal clauses (vv. 16-17a; cf. vv. 19a, 20a) and shifts all of its verbs to the third person. It is built of three subparts (vv. 16-17; vv. 18-21; vv. 22-23) which are structured in a concentric way.

The first and the third subpart are specular (they produce a kind of inclusion). In fact, at the level of content, v. 16 corresponds to v. 23 and v. 17 to

⁸ The verb *hsh* (v. 9b) is common in the Psalter and it is an example of liturgical wording; cf. E. Gerstenberger, "*hsh*, sich bergen," *THAT* I, 621-623; Eriksson, *Children*, 21.

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v. 22. At present Yhwh pays attention to the entreaty of the just (v. 16), while He is against the evildoers (v. 17). In the future, evil slays the wicked and the hater of the just man shall pay (v. 22), whereas Yhwh will protect the lives of his servants (v. 23). In other words, the first subpart introduces the opposition between the just, assisted by Yhwh (v. 16), and the malefactors, against whom Yhwh turns (v. 17). The third subpart resolves this opposition by resuming, in chiastic order, with the beneficiaries of Yhwh's activity. First, evildoers are touched by death (v. 22) and then God liberates his servants (v. 23)."

As with the outer subparts, the central subpart portrays in two parallel pieces (vv. 18-19; vv. 20-21) the just man (v. 20a) helped by Yhwh. Both pieces are conspicuous by the presence of initial terms which follow the subsequent paradigm: *mikkol + x + nšl Hi* (v. 18b and v. 20b) where x indicates a peril; juxtaposed with the expressions, "from all their distress" (v. 18b) and "from all of them Yhwh snatches him away" (v. 20b), is the fact of the deliverance which is offered respectively to the just and to the just man.¹⁰ Note as well verbs "[he] saves" (v. 19b) and "[he] watches over" (v. 21a). The final term *šbr Ni* is resumed ("broken," v. 19b; "will be broken," v. 21b). In the first piece, "they" are an object of Yhwh's care ("the brokenhearted," "the crushed in spirit," v. 19), while in the second piece it is "he" ("the just man," v. 20a). Terms from the semantic field of liberation unite the pieces together (*nšl Hi*, vv. 18b, 20b; *yšc Hi*, v. 19b; cf. *qārôb yhwh*, v. 19a; *šmr, lō' nišbārâ*, v. 21); the object of this liberation is, as seen above, the just man.

5. Global construction

Psalm 34 most likely forms a concentric arrangement A, B, A' (vv. 2-8, 9-15, 16-23).¹¹

⁹ This mirror construction contrasts with the remark of H. Eshel - J. Strugnell, "Alphabetical Acrostics in pre-Tannaitic Hebrew," *CBQ* 62 (2000) 443, that the *pr* stich would precede originally the *ain* stich; cf. Briggs, *Psalms* I, 295; H. Gunkel, *Die Psalmen* (Göttingen 1929, 1986) 143; Gaebelein, "Psalm 34," 135; G. Fohrer, *Psalmen* (De Gruyter Studienbuch; Berlin - New York 1993) 231. Moreover, the position of Eriksson, *Children*, 39, seems to be right, for he sustains that the masoretic sequence of vv. 16-17 can be maintained, since v. 17 develops the idea of v. 16.

¹⁰ It is not immediately clear who is the subject of the verb "they cried" (*šcāqū*) in v. 18a. For this reason the Septuagint adds "the just" (*hoi diakioi*; cf. Peshitta, Targum), mentioned above in v. 16a. This identification of the subject is followed by Rashi; D. Kimchi, *Commento ai salmi* I (Sal 1-50) (Roma 1991) 279; E. F. C. Rosenmüller, *Psalmi annotatione perpetua illustrati* (Scholia in Vetus Testamentum 4/2; Lipsiae 1822) 856; G. Phillips, *The Psalms in Hebrew* I (London 1846) 256; Delitzsch, *Psalmen*, 274; M. Dahood, *Psalms* I (Ps. 1-50) (AncB 16; Garden City 1966) 207; etc.

¹¹ Likewise, J.-N. Aletti - J. Trublet, *Approche poétique et théologique des Psaumes* (Paris 1983) 71-72, individuate in the psalm the concentric structure a, b, a', in three parts: vv. 2-7, 8-15, 16-23.

5.1 Relation between A and A'

There are some semantic repetitions, exclusive of these parts.

First of all, two paradigms emerge: a) "from all of" + peril + verb of liberation (vv. 5b, 7b, 18b, 20b); this paradigm concerns answering the man's request which God did at a time in the past; b) appeal (*qrʾlšʿq*) + "and Yhwh heard" (*wayhwh šāmēaʿ*, vv. 7a, 18a); cf. *dāraštī ʾet-yhwh wʿānānī* (v. 5a).

Subsequently, specific verbs of the field of salvation and liberation appear, *nšl Hi* ("snatch away," vv. 5b, 18b, 20b), *yšc Hi* ("save," vv. 7b, 19b), *hlš Pi* ("liberate," v. 8b), *pdh* ("ransom," v. 23a). There is an interchange of these verbs and other expressions related to Yhwh's liberating intervention: the image of Yhwh's angel who pitches a camp around believers (v. 8); God's proximity to the brokenhearted (v. 19), the protection of the bones of the just man (v. 21), and the attention to the cry of the just (v. 16).

As to the deliverance, a difference emerges between the first and the third part. In vv. 5-8 one refers to facts which happened in the past, while in vv. 16-23, besides the evocation of past events (v. 18), there appears a reference to the present situation looking toward a future solution, essentially encouraging the just man (vv. 16, 19, 20, 21, 23) and threatening gloom for the evildoer (vv. 17, 22).

Lexemes indicating the just man or the oppressed are another common element of these parts: *ʿānāwīm* ("the humble," v. 3b), *ʿānī* ("poor," v. 7a), *šaddīq* ("the just man," vv. 16a [pl.], 20a, 22b). This people are presented as a group which fears God (*yʿrēʾāyw*, v. 8b; cf. v. 10) and who are his servants (*ʿābādāyw*, v. 23a) who take refuge in him (v. 23b; cf. v. 9b).

The term "face" (*pānīm*) emphasizes the beaming countenance of the humble who look at Yhwh (v. 6b). This face contrasts with that of God (v. 17a), which is set against evildoers to punish them.

The word *nepes̄*, finally, indicates the pray-er who praises Yhwh in v. 3a, whereas in v. 23a it is Yhwh who liberates the *nepes̄* ("life") of his servants.

Concerning the liberation, there are, however, some differences between these parts. Only in A', in fact, are adversaries of the just called by name ("doers of evil," v. 17a; "the wicked man," v. 22a; "the haters of the just man," v. 22b), while in A they remain anonymous. Keeping in mind the lexical connection between these parts, the facts concerning past liberation are rendered plausible: (A) does not regard evil in the abstract or as interiorly experienced by the human being; rather, the cause of evil resides in exterior agents who unleash it against the oppressed poor.

Another difference concerns the identity of beneficiaries of the divine liberation. In A, there are the pray-er (v. 5a), "the humble" (v. 6a),¹² "[the] poor" (v. 7a),

¹² A subject of verbs in v. 6 is probably *ʿānāwīm* (cf. v. 3b); cf. e.g. Kimchi, *Salmi* 1, 274; Rosenmüller, *Psalmi*, 849; W. M. L. de Wette, *Commentar über die Psalmen* (Heidelberg 1856) 214.

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and "those who fear [the Lord]" (v. 8b). In A', instead, they are called "the just (man)" (vv. 16a, 20a, 22b), "the brokenhearted," "[the] crushed in spirit" (v. 19), "servants [of God]" (v. 23a), "those who take refuge in him" (v. 23b).

Finally, there is an implicit reference between *šēm* ("name," v. 4b) and *zeker* ("remembrance," "renown," v. 17b). When the humble¹³ exalt the name of Yhwh (v. 4b), He eradicates the remembrance of evildoers from the earth (v. 17b).

5.2 Part B

Beside what has already been treated, this part has connections with the others and explains why the liberation does not belong merely to past events (mostly in the first part), but that a future perspective is to be disclosed for it (third part).

5.2.1 Relation between B and A

One observes, first of all, the verbal repetitions. The root *drš* indicates the request to God, depicted in v. 5, as a single event (*qatal*), while in v. 11b, instead, there is habitual action (participle). Both cases involve beneficial consequences, the liberation of the pray-er from his fears (v. 5), and the experience of fullness (v. 11). According to a similar pattern, the repetition of the expression "for those who fear him" develops (*lir'ē'ayw*, vv. 8b, 10b). They are beneficiaries of the divine liberation (v. 8b) and ones who enjoy the good (v. 10b; cf. v. 11b).

Human subjects of the verb "to hear" (*šāma'*) are both the "humble" one (v. 3b), and the "sons" (v. 12a; in v. 7a is Yhwh). The root *šm'*, in volitive form, is used to provoke behavior which the pray-er claimed. On the one hand, he exhorts (*yiqtol-x*) the humble one to accept his invitation to praise and to benediction. On the other hand, he demands (imperative) the sons to learn the lesson of the fear of God.

Verbs *nbḥ Hi*, "to look" (v. 6a) and *r'ḥ*, "to see" (v. 9a) evoke the ("visual") experience of Yhwh who satisfies the human being. God does not permit shame (v. 6b) and grants to him the bliss deriving from the divine kindness (v. 9b).

These two parts place in semantic connection the organs of speaking, "mouth" (v. 2b), "tongue" and "lips" (v. 14). The mouth is capable of praising Yhwh always, on condition, however, that the tongue and the lips are pure, becoming disengaged from evil and from lies.

A certain complementarity between the self-exhortation to benediction ("I will bless," v. 2a) and the promise of felicity ("happy the man," v. 9b) should be connected with Yhwh: of Him, the pray-er can speak well and, taking refuge in Him, the bliss is guaranteed to human beings.

¹³ Instead of the humble, Venema, *Psalmos* II, 404, thinks of companions of the pray-er.

Finally, the first pieces of parts A and B echo each other, since they are formally associated with liturgy, with praise (vv. 2-4) and with looking for God in the temple (vv. 9-11).

5.2.2 Relation between B and A'

The last lesson given to the sons should influence them in accomplishing ('šh) good while stopping themselves from doing evil (v. 15). The proof of this teaching is the practical consequence in v. 17. Yhwh is against people who are not on the side of good but prefer to perform ('šh) evil; for the malefactors, the end is completely unpropitious (v. 17b).

In conformity with this interpretation the reiteration of the noun "evil" is used (*rā'*, vv. 14a, 15a; *rā'ā*, vv. 20a [pl.], 22a). In part B, the pray-er, in the capacity of a teacher, gives urgent advice to keep distance from evil (*mērā' bis*; separative *mīn*), without mentioning reasons for his exhortation. The further demonstration of the truth of his words is reported in A'. In fact, committing a wrong deed (v. 22a)¹⁴ conveys death to the wicked evildoer and requests the expiation of guilt from him who hates the just man. Being on the side of God does not protect the just man from experiencing tribulations and sufferings (v. 20a).¹⁵ This notwithstanding, the last word belongs to Yhwh, who snatches away the just man from his dire straits.

The faculty of hearing (*šm'*, vv. 12a, 18a) has its importance in these parts as well. Such ability is requested from one who is invited to learn the fear of Yhwh (v. 12a). No less indispensable is that Yhwh hears the just man (v. 18a); if He did not hear the cry of the just, they would remain in their distress.

Perceiving (*r'ḥ*) the goodness of God (v. 9a) and having experience of Him corresponds with the gaze of Yhwh's eyes directed on the just ('ēnē yhwh 'el..., v. 16a). This solicitude, announced in the opening of A', will find its accomplishment in Yhwh's aid, given to them (cf. vv. 18-21, 23).

The syntagma *hsh bō* ("to take refuge in him," vv. 9b, 23b) stresses that the search for God's aid is not an alienation but a sign of religious maturity which the human being displays, recognizing Yhwh as a source of all good.

Certainly, it is not a matter of any magic formula. The divine help appears as a conscious result of human commitment. If the human being watches his own steps (*nšr*, v. 14a), Yhwh guards him (*šmr*, v. 21a) efficiently.

Part B, then, puts in relief how the relationship with God, and consequently, with neighbor (see the transition between v. 12 and vv. 13-15), is the condition of

¹⁴ For evil (*rā'ā*) which one does against another, see e.g. Gen 26:29; Judg 11:27; 15:3; 1 Sam 23:9; 25:26; 1 Kgs 2:44; Ps 15:3.

¹⁵ This is probably the meaning of the *rā'ōt* (cf. Deut 31:17, 21; 32:23; Pss 40:13; 71:20; 88:4); cf. H. J. Stoebe, "r'", schlecht sein," *THAT* II, 801.

success. The just relationship with Yhwh appears as the source of the favorable realization of life (here) verified in the past (part A) and expected in the future (part A'). The connection with Yhwh allows the just man to experience His goodness (v. 9). This bond is accomplished through the abandonment of oneself to God (v. 9); it manifests itself in asking for God's help in crucial circumstances (v. 11) and in the awe (v. 10) acquired in the school of the Lord (v. 12), which finds expression mainly in avoiding evil and doing good (vv. 14-15). In fact, to learn a lesson leads to salvation (cf. vv. 16, 18-21, 23), whereas to be reluctant in accepting the teaching of wisdom leads to death (cf. vv. 17, 22).

Conclusion

The above analysis shows that Psalm 34 is structured in a concentric fashion in three parts, viz., A. B. A'. Some peculiar traits speak in favor of such an arrangement. As the first formal feature, one observes that Yhwh is a subject of the verbs in vv. 2-8 and vv. 16-23, while He is not in vv. 9-15 (even if He is mentioned in the third person). Subsequently, the specific cultic and sapiential wording of vv. 9-15 permits the isolation of this central part, something which also distinguishes it from vv. 2-8 and vv. 16-23; other literary units, though characteristic of these parts due to the common vocabulary and anthropological terminology, are not exclusive of them.

Part one (vv. 2-8) is the pray-er's thanksgiving for the past help of Yhwh. Part two (vv. 9-15) deals with the theme of the fear of the Lord from a liturgical and wisdom point of view. Part three (vv. 16-23) proposes the opposite destiny of the just and the wicked. The arrangement of the psalm discloses that the psalmist composed his lyric according to a compositional plan.

At least four consequences follow from this statement: a) The concentric construction supports the fact that such a structure prevails over an acrostic pattern. b) Both the parallelism between the part A and A' and the repetition of verbs from the semantic field of salvation (vv. 5, 7 // vv. 18, 20) invite one to understand that the (direct) objects are interchangeable; consequently, one may identify the "poor / humble" (A) with the "the just man / servant" (A'), who are also portrayed with other names¹⁶. c) Although there are many literary *genres* within the psalm, it seems that the opening verses (vv. 2-4, 5-8) confer to the psalm a dominant timbre of individual thanksgiving for past liberation, while being open to the future perspective of God's powerful aid as well. d) Such an

¹⁶ One may note that J. Coppens, "Le *Ṣaddiq* - «juste», dans le Psautier," *De la Tôrah au Messie. Études d'exégèse et d'herméneutique bibliques offertes à Henri Cazelles* (ed. M. Carrez - J. Doré - P. Grelot) (Paris 1981) 302.

articulation finds its explanation in the central part (B), which contains a reference to liturgy (vv. 9-11) and to wisdom (vv. 12-15). The function of these subparts is to highlight two recommendations to endure the threat of malefactors: turning to God (*drš*) and experiencing His presence (*rʿh*), as well as learning His fear (*yʿ*) and living with respect due to Him (cf. altering of *rʿh*, vv. 9, 13 and of *yʿ*, vv. 10, 12). From the human point of view, it seems to be a feeble solution. However, it is a possibility which allows one to avoid the worst, especially when the human being, instead of immediately requiting the evil suffered with more evil, moves away from it and assiduously searches for the good. This is not a mere anthropological effort, but is sustained by God; in Him, it finds its source, if His aid is recognized as being indispensable.

Summary

"Chcę błogosławić Pana w każdym czasie": kompozycja Psalmu 34

Jednym z elementów stylu poetyckiego Psalmu 34 jest jego kompozycja, którą badacze interpretują w różny sposób. Większość z nich nie podaje wyraźnie przesłanek wprowadzonych przez siebie podziałów i ogranicza się do stwierdzeń sumarycznych. Są jednak i tacy, którzy zajmują się wnikliwą analizą budowy psalmu. Niniejszy artykuł obiera taki styl badań: posługując się retoryczną terminologią R. Meyneta, ściśle rozgraniczającą jednostki literackie na różnych poziomach kompozycji, i opierając się na kryteriach formalnych i treściowych poddaje tekst psalmu szczegółowej analizie.

Należy odnotować, że przed publikacją tego tekstu ukazał się artykuł P. Auffreta, "Yhwh entendant. Étude structurelle du Psaume 34", *ZAW* 116 (2004) 348-363. Autor na nowo przemyślał dwa przyczynki M. Girarda i dwa przyczynki własne, wprowadzając do nich pewne ulepszenia. Mówiąc ogólnie, zachował czteroczęściową strukturę psalmu (w. 2-4; 5-8; 9-15; 16-23). Zaproponowane przez niego jednostki literackie częściowo pokrywają się z tymi, które są wyodrębnione w obecnym artykule. Wydaje się, że można pozostać przy rezultatach dotychczasowych analiz co do poziomów kompozycyjnych i ich wzajemnych relacji.

Przeprowadzona analiza kompozycji ukazuje, że Psalm 34 jest tekstem literacko scalonym. Składa się bowiem z trzech części, które tworzą formę koncentryczną A, B, A' (w. 2-8; 9-15; 16-23). Za takim układem przemawiają pewne cechy specyficzne. Po pierwsze, jedynie w w. 2-8 i 16-23 Jhwh pojawia się w roli autora czynności, wyrażonych za pomocą czasowników, podczas gdy On nie jest ich sprawcą w w. 9-15 (mimo że wspomina się Go w trzeciej osobie). Po wtóre, swoiste słownictwo kultowe i mądrościowe w. 9-15 pozwala wyodręb-

"I will bless YHWH in every time": the composition of Psalm 34

nić tę centralną część psalmu i odróżnić ją od w. 2-8 i 16-23. W tych ostatnich jednostkach literackich występuje wspólna terminologia antropologiczna (zob. "usta" w. 2b; "dusza/życie" w. 3a, 23a; "twarz" w. 6b, 17a; "oczy" w. 16a; "uszy" w. 16b; "serce" w. 19a; "duch" w. 19b; "kości" w. 21a). Aczkolwiek to nazewnictwo jest charakterystyczne dla części A i A', nie jest ono jednak ich wyłączną własnością (zob. "język", "wargi", w. 14).

W części pierwszej (w. 2-8) orant dziękuje za pomoc, której niegdyś udzielił mu Jhwh. W części drugiej (w. 9-15) poucza on o bojaźni Pańskiej z punktu widzenia liturgii i mądrości. W części trzeciej (w. 16-23) podejmuje wątek losu, który jest inny dla człowieka sprawiedliwego i dla nieprawego. Układ psalmu ujawnia, że psalmista napisał ten utwór zgodnie z planem kompozycyjnym.

Powyższe uwagi prowadzą do następujących wniosków: a. budowa koncentryczna wzmacnia przekonanie, że tego rodzaju układ przeważa nad kompozycją, zasadzającą się na akrostychu alfabetycznym. W rezultacie tego ostatniego wzorca nie należy przyjmować jako podstawę podziału tekstu na części lub strofy; b. podobieństwo części A i A', wynikające z ich paralelnej symetryczności, oraz czterokrotne powtórzenie paradygmatycznych konstrukcji wyrazowych: "i z wszystkich" + niebezpieczeństwo + czasownik należący do pola semantycznego zbawienia (w. 5b, 7b || w. 18b, 20b), pozwalają przyjąć, że dopełnienia (bliźsze) są zamienne. Można więc identyfikować "biedaka / pokomego" (A) ze "sprawiedliwym / sługą" (A'), których psalmista opisał również za pomocą innych słów ("bogobojny", w. 8b; człowiek o "złamanym sercu", "przybity na duchu", w. 19; "uciekający się do Niego", w. 23b); c. mimo że w psalmie występuje kilka rodzajów literackich, wydaje się, że początkowe wiersze nadają mu dominantę podziękowania jednostki za minione ocalenie (w. 2-8), pozostawiając przy tym otwartą perspektywę wsparcia Bożej potęgi (w. 16-23). Formy wolitywne, obecne w w. 2-4, jednoznacznie akcentują zaproszenie do składania Panu radosnego dziękczynienia ("chcę błogosławić", w. 2a; "niech się chlubi", w. 3a; "niech słyszą [...] i niech się weselą", w. 3b; "wychwalajcie [...] abyśmy wywyższali", w. 4ab), a formy czasownikowe czasu przeszłego w w. 5-8 wskazują na podłoże tej dziękczynnej modlitwy ("pytałem [...] i odpowiedział [...] i uwolnił", w. 5ab; "patrzyli [...] i rozjaśnili się", w. 6a; "nie oblały się wstydem", w. 6b; "zawołał [...] i usłyszał [...] i wybawił", w. 7ab; "rozbił obóz [...] i ochronił", w. 8ab); d. zwornikiem tego rodzaju artykulacji jest część środkowa (B), zawierająca odniesienie do liturgii (w. 9-11) i do mądrości (w. 12-15). Funkcją tych podczęści jest wypuklenie dwóch wskazań, by wytrwać wobec realnego zagrożenia przez złoczyńców: należy zwrócić się do Boga (*dhš*), doświadczając Jego obecności (*ʾlh*), i uczyć się bojaźni Pańskiej (*yʾ*), żyjąc z należnym Mu szacunkiem (zob. występujące na przemian rdzenie *ʾlh*, w. 9, 13 i *yʾ*, w. 10, 12). Z ludzkiego punktu widzenia wydaje się, że psalmista proponuje rozwiązanie

w znacznym stopniu wątpliwe. Jednakże jawi się ono jako opcja pozwalająca uniknąć gorszego, zwłaszcza gdy jednostka, zamiast odpowiadać bezpośrednio na wyświadczone zło jeszcze większym złem, odsuwa się od niego i wytrwale poszukuje dobra. Co więcej, nie jest to wyłącznie wysiłek antropologiczny. Ten wysiłek podtrzymuje Jhwh. W Bogu otucha znajduje swe źródło, pod warunkiem że człowiek uzna za nieodzowną Jego pomoc.