

## CHAPTER 2

### PSALM 35

#### 2.1 Introduction

Psalm 35 is the first candidate for the study of imprecatory psalms. This psalm is frequently classified as an imprecatory psalm (see section 1.5.2). As Ellison (1968:32) states, Psalm 35 is “the first, though not the strongest, of the imprecatory psalms.” In this psalm, the psalmist asks God to pour out judgment on his enemies. The psalmist suffers unjustly at the hands of his enemies, who sought to destroy his life and reputation. The psalmist prays for his own vindication and his enemies’ downfall and he also vows to praise YHWH for his deliverance (verses 9-10, 18 and 27-28).

This chapter is organised in accordance to the methodology described in chapter 1 of the present study (see section 1.5.2).

#### 2.2 Text and Translation<sup>6</sup>

|                |   | לְרֹד  |                |   | Of David.  |
|----------------|---|--|----------------|---|--|
| I <sup>7</sup> | A | רִיבָה יְהוָה אֶת־רִיבָי                       | 1 <sup>8</sup> | a | Contend, YHWH, with those who contend with me;   |
|                |   | לָחֶם אֶת־לֹחְמִי:                             |                | b | fight against those fighting against me.         |
|                |   | הִחַזֵּק מִגֹּן וְצַנָּה                       | 2              | a | Take up shield and buckler,                      |
|                |   | וְקוּמָה בְּעֶזְרָתִי:                         |                | b | and rise up in my aid.                           |
|                |   | וְהִרְקֵן חֲנִית וְסֶגֶר לְקָרְאֵת<br>רַדְפָּי | 3              | a | And draw out spear and pike to meet my pursuers. |

<sup>6</sup> This is my own translation. All quotations from Psalm 35 in this study are taken from this translation unless stated otherwise.

<sup>7</sup> This subdivision of Psalm 35 into **stanzas** (Roman numerals) and **strophes** (uppercase letters) is discussed in 2.4.

<sup>8</sup> When citing the Psalms and other scriptural passages, the numbering and versification of the BHS text is used throughout the present study rather than the numbering and versification of the LXX, Vulgate, or modern translations.

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|--|---|---|----|---|--|
|  |   | אָמַר לְנַפְשִׁי יִשְׁעֲתֶךָ אֲנִי:               |    | b | Say to my soul, "I am your deliverance."                     |
|  | B | יִבְשׁוּ וַיִּכְלְמוּ                             | 4  | a | Let them be put to shame and dishonour                       |
|  |   | מִבִּקְשֵׁי נַפְשִׁי                              |    | b | who seek my soul!  |
|  |   | יִסְגּוּ אַחֲזֹר וַיִּחְפְּרוּ                    |    | c | Let them be turned back and humiliated                       |
|  |   | חֲשָׁבֵי רָעָתִי                                  |    | d | who devise evil against me!                                  |
|  |   | יִהְיוּ כְּמִיץ לִפְנֵי-רוּחַ                     | 5  | a | Let them be like chaff before the wind,                      |
|  |   | וּמַלְאֲךָ יְהוָה דוֹחָהּ:                        |    | b | with the angel of YHWH driving [them].                       |
|  |   | יִהְיֶה-דַרְכָּם חֹשֶׁךְ וַחֲלָקְלָקוֹת           | 6  | a | Let their way be dark and slippery,                          |
|  |   | וּמַלְאֲךָ יְהוָה רֹדְפָם:                        |    | b | with the angel of YHWH pursuing them.                        |
|  |   | כִּי-חֲנָם טָמְנוּ-לִי שַׁחַת רְשָׁתָם            | 7  | a | For without cause, they hid their net for me;                |
|  |   | חֲנָם חָפְרוּ לְנַפְשִׁי:                         |    | b | without cause, they dug a pit for my soul.                   |
|  |   | תְּבוֹאֵהוּ שׂוֹאָה לֹא-יֵדָע                     | 8  | a | Let destruction come upon him unexpectedly.                  |
|  |   | וּרְשָׁתוֹ אֲשֶׁר-טָמַן תִּלְכְּדוּ               |    | b | And let the net which he hid catch him;                      |
|  |   | בְּשׂוֹאָה יִפֹּל-בָּהּ:                          |    | c | into that very destruction let him fall.                     |
|  | C | וְנַפְשִׁי תִגִּיל בַּיהוָה                       | 9  | a | And my soul will rejoice in YHWH;                            |
|  |   | תִּשְׂשֵׁשׁ בִּישׁוּעָתוֹ:                        |    | b | it will exult in His deliverance.                            |
|  |   | כָּל עַצְמוֹתַי תֹּאמַרְנָה<br>יְהוָה מִי כָמוֹךָ | 10 | a | All my bones will say,<br>"YHWH, who is like you?"           |
|  |   | מַצִּיל עֲנִי מִחַזֵּק מִמֶּנּוּ                  |    | b | One who delivers the weak from the one<br>stronger than him, |
|  |   | וְעֲנִי וְאֶבְיוֹן מִגְזֹלוֹ                      |    | c | and the weak and afflicted from the one who<br>robs him."    |

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| II | D | יְקוּמוּן עֲדֵי חַמָּס                          | 11 | a | Violent witnesses rise up;  |
|    |   | אֲשֶׁר לֹא יֵדְעוּתִי וְשִׁאלוּנִי              |    | b | what I do not know, they ask me.  |
|    |   | יִשְׁלְמוּנִי רָעָה תַּחַת טוֹבָה               | 12 | a | They repay me evil for good,  |
|    |   | שָׂכֹל לְנַפְשִׁי:                              |    | b | a bereavement of my soul.   |
|    | E | וְאֲנִי בַחֲלוּתָם<br>לְבוּשֵׁי שָׂק            | 13 | a | But as for me, when they were sick,<br>my clothing was sackcloth;                 |
|    |   | עֲנִיתִי בְצוּם נַפְשִׁי                        |    | b | I afflicted my soul with fasting.   |
|    |   | וּתְפִלָּתִי עַל-חִיקֵי תְּשׁוּבָה:             |    | c | And my prayer kept returning to my bosom.   |
|    |   | כְּרַע-כַּפָּאֵחַ לִי הִתְהַלַּכְתִּי           | 14 | a | As if [mourning] for a friend or brother, I<br>walked about.                      |
|    |   | כְּאִבְלֵ-אִם קָדַר שְׁחוּתִי:                  |    | b | As if mourning like a mother, I bowed down,<br>gloomily.                          |
|    | F | וּבְצִלְעֵי שְׂמֵחָו וְנֹאסְפוֹ                 | 15 | a | But when I stumbled, they rejoiced and<br>gathered together;                      |
|    |   | נֹאסְפוֹ עָלַי:                                 |    | b | they gathered together against me!  |
|    |   | נֹכִים<br>וְלֹא יָדַעְתִּי קָרְעוּ וְלֹא-דָמּוּ |    | c | Smitters –<br>[whom] I did not know - tore [me] apart and<br>would not be silent! |
|    |   | בְּחַנְפֵי לַעֲגִי מְעוֹג                       | 16 | a | With godless mockers at a feast,  |
|    |   | חָרַק עָלַי שְׁנִימוֹ:                          |    | b | they gnash their teeth against me.  |
|    | G | אֲדָנִי כַמָּה תִרְאֶה                          | 17 | a | My Lord, how long will you look on?   |
|    |   | הַשִּׁיבָה נַפְשִׁי מִשְׂאִיָּהֶם               |    | b | Rescue my soul from their devastation,  |
|    |   | מִכְּפִירִים יַחֲדָתִי:                         |    | c | my only [soul] from the lions.  |
|    |   | אוֹדֶךָ בְּקֶהֱל רַב                            | 18 | a | I will give you thanks in the great<br>congregation;                              |
|    |   | בְּעַם עֲצוּם אֶהְלֵלְךָ:                       |    | b | in the mighty crowd, I will praise you.   |

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| III | H | אֶל-יִשְׂמְחוּ-לִי                                     | 19 | a | Do not let them rejoice over me,  |
|     |   | אִיבֵי שָׂקָר  |    | b | those who are wrongfully my enemies,                                    |
|     |   | שְׂנְאֵי חֵנָם   |    | c | those who hate me without cause,  |
|     |   | יִקְרְצוּ-עֵינָי:                                      |    | d | wink the eye.   |
|     |   | כִּי לֹא שָׁלוֹם יִדְבְּרוּ                            | 20 | a | For they do not speak peace,  |
|     |   | וְעַל הַנְּעִי-אֶרֶץ<br>דְּבָרֵי מִרְמוֹת יַחְשְׁבוּן: |    | b | but against the quiet ones of the land,<br>they devise deceitful words. |
|     |   | וַיִּנְחִיבוּ עָלַי פִּיהֶם                            | 21 | a | And then they opened wide their mouths<br>against me;                   |
|     |   | אָמְרוּ הָאֵחַ הָאֵחַ רָאִתָּה עֵינֵינוּ:              |    | b | they said, "Aha! Aha! Our eyes have seen it."                           |
|     | I | רָאִיתָה   | 22 | a | You have seen it,   |
|     |   | יְהוָה אֶל-תִּחַרֶּשׁ                                  |    | b | YHWH do not be silent;  |
|     |   | אֲדָנִי אֶל-תִּרְחַק מִמֶּנִּי:                        |    | c | my Lord, do not be far away from me.                                    |
|     |   | הָעִירָה וְהִקְיֵצָה לְמִשְׁפָּטִי                     | 23 | a | Awake and rise to my defence,   |
|     |   | אֱלֹהֵי וְאֲדָנִי לְרִיבִי:                            |    | b | my God and my Lord, to contend for me.                                  |
|     |   | שְׁפֹטֵנִי כְצִדְקַךָּ יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי                  | 24 | a | Defend me in your righteousness, YHWH my<br>God,                        |
|     | J | וְאֶל-יִשְׂמְחוּ-לִי:                                  |    | b | and do not let them rejoice over me.                                    |
|     |   | אֶל-יֹאמְרוּ בְּלִבָּם הָאֵחַ נִפְשָׁנוּ               | 25 | a | Do not let them say in their heart, "Aha, our<br>desire!"               |
|     |   | אֶל-יֹאמְרוּ בָּלַעְנוּהוּ:                            |    | b | Do not let them say, "We have swallowed<br>him up!"                     |
|     |   | יִבְשׁוּ וַיִּחְפְּרוּ יַחְדָּו                        | 26 | a | Let them be ashamed and humiliated<br>altogether,                       |

<sup>9</sup> BHS suggests the vowel is probably a mistake in Leningradensis, and should be la; like in many other Hebrew manuscripts.

|  |   |                                       |    |   |   |
|--|---|---------------------------------------|----|---|---|
|  |   | שְׂמַחֵי רָעָתִי                      |    | b | those who rejoice in my misfortune;                 |
|  |   | וְלִבְשׁוֹ-בִשְׁתּוֹ וּכְלָמָה        |    | c | let them be clothed with shame and disgrace,        |
|  |   | הַמְגַדִּילִים עָלַי:                 |    | d | they who magnified themselves over me.              |
|  | K | יִרְנְנוּ וַיִּשְׂמְחוּ               | 27 | a | Let them shout for joy and rejoice,                 |
|  |   | חֲפְצֵי צְדָקָי                       |    | b | those who delight in my righteousness.              |
|  |   | וַיֹּאמְרוּ תָמִיד<br>יְגִדֵּל יְהוָה |    | c | And they shall say continuously,<br>“YHWH is great, |
|  |   | הַחֲפֵץ שְׁלוֹם עַבְדָּו:             |    | d | he who delights in his servant’s peace.”            |
|  |   | וּלְשׁוֹנִי תְהַנֶּה צְדָקָךָ         | 28 | a | And my tongue will proclaim your<br>righteousness,  |
|  |   | כָּל-הַיּוֹם תְּהַלֵּלְתֶּךָ:         |    | b | all day your praise.                                |

### 2.3 Text Critical and Translation Notes

#### Verse 3a סָגַר - “pike”

The Masoretic Text vocalizes the consonants as if the word (סָגַר) is an imperative of the verb “close, shut off” which does not make sense in the context of verses 1-3. The BHS gives two suggestions in resolving the translation problem. Firstly, וּסָגַר can be read as וּסְגָר which means “and double-axe” (Holladay, 1988:253; Kissane, 1953:154; Kraus, 1988:391). Secondly, the BHS also mentions that the noun סָגָר is used in the Qumran sources (1QM 5,7.9) and may be part of spear (*hasta*). Anderson (1972a:277) argues from the Qumran sources (1QM 5,7.9), that the noun סָגָר refers to the “socket or clasp of the blade of the spear” from which a throwing spear (or javelin) is launched. Consequently he argues that the corresponding word in verse 3 probably means “javelin or pike” and is denoted by metonymy. Thus scholars are divided with regards to the meaning of סָגַר. The present translation follows the second suggestion given by the BHS and translates סָגַר as pike.

**Verse 7.** כִּי-חֲנָם טָמְנוּ-לִי שַׁחַת רַשְׁתָּם חֲנָם חָפְרוּ לְנַפְשִׁי -“For without cause, they hid their net for me; without cause, they dug a pit for my soul.”

The translation of verse 7 is problematic. The Hebrew of verse 7 is disjointed and difficult. The Syriac omits both occurrences of חָנַף (“without cause”) in 7a and 7b, and it replaces the adverb חָנַף which appears in the Masoretic Text in 7b with שָׁחַת (“pit”) from 7a. Following the Syriac, the NIV and NASB assume the transposition of the noun שָׁחַת (“pit”) from its awkward position in the first phrase of verse 7 to a more appropriate position in the second phrase, where it provides the missing object of “dig”. Some scholars (e.g. Craigie, 1983:283-85; Kraus, 1988:389, 391) omit חָנַף (“without cause”) from the second phrase as repetitive. Dahood (1966:211-12) postulates on the basis of Ugaritic a root for the same word that means “stealthily.” The present translation follows the approach of the NIV and NASB in resolving the translation problem in the verse.

**Verse 8c.** בְּשׂוֹאָה יִפֹּל-בָּהּ – “into that very destruction let him fall.”

The translation of 8c is controversial. The existing Hebrew provides the difficult “into ruin let him fall in it”- the double preposition is a bit awkward. Instead of בְּשׂוֹאָה (“into ruin”) the Syriac has the equivalent of וְשׂוֹחָה אֲשֶׁר הִפְרוּ (“which they dug”). Therefore, the Syriac suggests that instead of בְּשׂוֹאָה (“into ruin”) we read the word בְּשׂוֹחָה (“into the pit”). The implication here is that the copyist could have made the mistake of writing the word בְּשׂוֹאָה (“into ruin”) when he meant to write בְּשׂוֹחָה (“into the pit”) (Briggs & Briggs, 1906:304). The NAB, BJ and NJB follow the Syriac text. The NIV’s “into the pit, to their ruin” is a conflation of these two options. Traditionally, the word שׂוֹאָה means ruin or waste (see Holladay, 1988:362; Konkel, 1997:2-3; Rogers, 1980:890). However Dahood (1966:212) takes בְּשׂוֹאָה to mean the pit. Konkel (1997:3) suggests that the ruin (שׂוֹאָה) is in the metaphor of a pit dug as a trap. In spite of the Syriac, there is no reason to emend בְּשׂוֹאָה (“into ruin”) to בְּשׂוֹחָה (“into the pit”) for the repetition of the word calls attention to the calamity and the means. The KJV stays with the Masoretic Text, “let them fall into it when disaster [strikes].” The present translation, “into that very destruction (בְּשׂוֹאָה) let him fall” (8c), follows the KJV and NASB’s approach, staying with the Masoretic Text and taking בְּשׂוֹאָה in 8c as parallel to שׂוֹאָה in 8a.

**Verse 12b.** לְנַפְשִׁי לְשָׂכּוֹל – “a bereavement of my soul.”

The translation of verse 12b is problematic among scholars. The LXX translates שָׁכַל as καὶ ἀτεκνίαν (“childlessness”). The BHS suggests reading שָׁכוּ or שָׁרוּ instead of שָׁכַל, taking the final ל in the Masoretic Text’s שָׁכַל as dittography. A number of scholars (e.g. Kraus, 1988:391; Craigie, 1983:285) follow BHS’ suggestion and they translate שָׁכַל as (“they lie in wait for”). Dahood (1966:213) suggests a *Shaphel* verb form from כָּלָה (“to be spent, destroyed”). The phrase לְנַפְשִׁי לְשָׁכַל in 12b implies that due to the actions of the psalmist’s enemies who were returning evil for good, the suppliant’s soul was crushed or grieved just like one grieves over a loss of children. The present translation and the NASB follow this interpretation. Therefore, verse 12 is translated as “they repay me evil for good, a bereavement of my soul.”

#### Verse 15c. נְכִים – “smitters”

The translation of נְכִים is difficult, since the word occurs nowhere else other than here in Psalm 35:15. A variety of solutions have been suggested by scholars and commentators:

- The LXX reads the Masoretic Text נְכִים as נִמְכִים (“scourges/whips”), so it translates נְכִים as μάστιγες.
- Brown *et al* (1979:646) translate נְכִים as (“smitten ones, i.e. cripples”). The RSV, KJV, ESV and ASV follow this interpretation.
- Wilson (1980:557) translates נְכִים as “stricken.”
- Craigie (1983:285) replaces the Masoretic Text נְכִים by הַקְּכִים (“oppressor”) on the basis of the Dead Sea manuscript 4QPs<sup>a</sup>.
- Kraus (1988:391) amends נְכִים to נְכָרִים (“strangers”). The NJB also follows this interpretation.
- Dahood (1966:213) reads the Masoretic Text נְכִים as נְכִים (“smitters”). According to Dahood reading נְכִים עָלַי נְכִים (Masoretic Text נְכִים) in 15b-c, forms a three bit colon to balance 3 beat וְנִצַּלְעִי שְׂמַחוּ וְנִאֲסָפוּ in 15a. Dahood (1966:213) suggests that the *gal* form of נָכַי (“to smite”) may have been used in addition to the *hiphil* form. The present translation follows this approach and it translates נְכִים as “smitters.” The NASB also follows this interpretation.

#### Verse 16a. בְּחַנְפֵי לְעֵנִי מְעוּג – “with godless mockers at a feast.”

The meaning of **לְעֵנִי מְעוֹג בְּחִנְפֵי** (“with the godless mockers of a cake”) in verse 16 is very problematic. Brown *et al* (1979:541) translate the adjective **לְעֵנִי** as “mockers.” The noun **מְעוֹג** means cake (Schultz, 1980b:648; Feuer, 1985:430). The LXX amends the Masoretic Text **לְעֵנִי מְעוֹג בְּחִנְפֵי** to **לְעֵג לְעֵנִי מְעוֹג בְּחִנְפֵי** (“they tempted me, with mockery they mocked me”) and translates 16a as ἐπείρασάν με ἐξεμυκτηρίσάν με μυκτηρισμόν. The NAB follows the Septuagint: “without respect they mocked me.” Because the meaning of the Masoretic Text **לְעֵנִי מְעוֹג בְּחִנְפֵי** is problematic, a number of suggestions have been made by scholars and commentators:

- Some argue that the phrase is an allusion to knaves who mock at their neighbours for a piece of cake (Anderson, 1972a:282).
- Dahood (1966:214) translates the phrase “when the encircling mockers slandered me (**בְּחִנְפֵי**)” arguing that **חִנַּף** can also mean “to slander,” and deriving **מְעוֹג** from **עגג** or **עוג** (“to draw a circle” or “to make a cake”).
- Eaton (2003:159) sees verse 16a as an allusion to spells and sorcery. The psalmist was in a time of weakness, his adversaries had encircled him and they were striking him with evil words.
- Some scholars (e.g. Eaton, 2003:157), with a change in vowels in **בְּחִנְפֵי**, propose “when I faltered, they mocked me unceasingly.” The NJB has “if I fall they surround me.” The TEV has “like men who would mock a cripple.”

The noun **מְעוֹג** in 16a means “a cake” (see Schultz, 1980b:648). In its context it is used to describe eating in general or a feast (Feuer, 1985:430). The present translation follows this approach. The NASB, KJV and ESV also follow this interpretation.

#### **Verse 17b.** **מִשְׂאֵיהֶם** – “from their devastation.”

The meaning of **מִשְׂאֵיהֶם** (“from their devastation”) in verse 17 is problematic, giving rise to a number of suggestions:

- The LXX translates **מִשְׂאֵיהֶם** as ἀπὸ τῆς κακουργίας αὐτῶν (“from their mischief”). With reference to the LXX the BHS proposes **מִשְׂאֵנִים** (“from those that roar”). The suggestion

of BHS seems to agree with the parallel word מִכַּפְּרִים (“from the lions”) in 17c (see Kraus, 1988:391). Kraus (1988:391) follows the approach of the BHS.

- Dahood (1966:214) assumes a connection with the same root as employed in שׁוֹאָה (verse 8) and suggests the meaning “from the pits.”
- Koehler & Baumgartner (1958:951) suggests that שְׂאִיָּהִם may have been derived from the root שׁוֹא (“trouble, storm”).
- Like Dahood, Feuer (1985:430) assumes a connection with the same root as employed in שׁוֹאָה but suggests the meaning “from their darkness.”
- The NIV assumes an unusual masculine plural form of the feminine noun שְׂאִיָּהִם (“from their ravages”). The present translation follows the NIV’s approach in resolving the translation problem and translates מִשְׂאִיָּהִם as “from their devastation.”

**Verse 17c.** יְחִידָתִי – “my only [soul].”

In 17c the noun that is modified by the adjective יְחִידָתִי (“my only”) is missing from the text, so the noun נַפְשׁ (“soul”) is relexicalised by a number of translations (e.g. NASB, KJV, ESV, NIV, NJB). The present translation follows the same approach in resolving the translation problem in the verse 17.

## 2.4 The Structure of Psalm 35<sup>10</sup>

When looking at the structure of Psalm 35, the most conspicuous feature of the psalm is the vow or resolve to praise God for his deliverance or an expression of certainty that God will save the psalmist in the time of his need (verses 9-10, 18 and 28) (see Durham, 1971:240; Anderson, 1972a:275; Craigie, 1983:285-286; Bratcher & Reyburn, 1991:328; Clifford, 2002:178; Wilson, 2002:578; Eaton, 2003:158). The repetition of this vow or resolve to praise

<sup>10</sup> In order to avoid any possibility of ambiguity or misunderstanding, the terms used in analyzing Hebrew poetry in the present study are defined. The term *stanza* refers to a sub-unit within a poem or psalm and *strophe* refers to a sub-unit within a stanza. A *strophe* is made up of one colon or more cola. A *tricolon* comprises of a set of three cola which are parallel to each other and form a single unit. A *bicolon* consists of a pair of lines or cola which are parallel to each other (Watson, 1986:11-15; 160-167; Prinsloo, 1994:81-82). A *colon* comprises of “an independent linguistic unit containing at least one verb phrase (which may also be a nominal statement) and one noun phrase” (Botha, 1991:385).

God in verses 9-10, 18 and 28 functions as an important structure maker, according to which Psalm 35 may be subdivided into 3 stanzas: verses 1-10, 11-18, 19-28. Each stanza consists of a petition, a lament and a vow or a resolve to praise the Lord for his help (verses 9-10; 18; 28) (Broyles, 1999:170; Anderson, 1972a:275). This three-fold division of the psalm is supported by many scholars such as Briggs & Briggs (1906:302-309), Gaebelein (1939:157), Anderson (1972a:275), Kidner (1973:142), Delitzsch (1980a:417), Craigie (1983:285), Bratcher & Reyburn (1991:328), VanGemeren (1991:286), Motyer (1994:507), Davidson (1998:119), Broyles (1999:170-172), Wilcock (2001a:118), Clifford (2002:178) Eaton (2003:158), Okorochoa (2006:606) and Goldingay (2007a:489).

The imagery of lawsuit and war introduced in the first verse of the poem fits very well in the outline of the Psalm. Stanza I (verses 1-10) develops the image of the battlefield. Stanza II (verses 11-18) develops the image of a lawsuit. Finally, in stanza III, both images are brought together (verses 19-28) (See Boice, 1994:302; Wilson, 2002:578-579; Broyles, 1999:170).

The three stanzas of Psalm 35 may be sub-divided into the following strophes (see Gerstenberger, 1988:149-50):

**Stanza I (1-10) A Military Threat**

- Strophe A (1a-3b) Urgent call to YHWH, the divine advocate and warrior.
- Strophe B (4a-8c) A series of imprecations against enemies.
- Strophe C (9a-10c) A promise to rejoice and praise YHWH.

**Stanza II (11-18) The Trial**

- Strophe D (11a-12b) The suppliant's distress.
- Strophe E (13a-14b) The suppliant's confession of innocence.
- Strophe F (15a-16b) Reiteration of his distress.
- Strophe G (17a-18b) Renewed appeal and vow to give thanks.

**Stanza III 19-28 A Prayer for Victory**

- Strophe H (19a-21b) Imprecation against his enemies.
- Strophe I (22a-24a) Renewed petition for YHWH to intervene.

Strophe J (24b-26d) Further imprecation against his enemies.

Strophe K (27a-28b) Call to praise YHWH and vow to proclaim his righteousness.

The above literary structure of Psalm 35 will be discussed in detail in the subsequent analysis.

## 2.5 Intra-textual Analysis of Psalm 35

### 2.5.1 Stanza I (verses 1-10): A Military Threat

Stanza I (verses 1-10) develops the image of the battlefield in 1b. The suppliant is under military attack and he calls upon YHWH, the divine warrior, to come to his aid.

#### 2.5.1.1 Strophe A (verses 1-3)

Strophe A (verses 1-3) consists of three bicola.

In the **first bicolon (verse 1)**, 1a commences with the imperative רִיבָה (“contend”) which is directed to the subject YHWH. The noun YHWH also functions as a vocative. The subject (יהוה) is then followed by the prepositional object אֶת־רִיבָי (“with those who contend with me”). The recipient of YHWH’s action is the suppliant.

1b commences with the imperative לָחֶם (“fight”) which is followed by the prepositional object אֶת־לֹחְמָי (“those fighting against me”). The prepositional object consists of the preposition אֶת, which is attached to the participle לֹחְמָי. The imperative לָחֶם is directed to YHWH. The recipient of YHWH’s action is the suppliant. There is also a word-play in the bicolon (1a and 1b) in the form of repetition in which the root רִיב is repeated in 1a and the root לָחֶם is repeated in 1b, namely רִיבָה...רִיבָי (“Contend...contend”) and לָחֶם...לֹחְמָי (“fight...fighting”). The word-play introduces two images of YHWH: YHWH is portrayed as an advocate and as a divine warrior. The purpose of the word-play is to draw attention of YHWH so that he quickly responds to the urgency of the plea.

As far as coherence or semantic relations are concerned, there is a synthetic parallelism BASE-ADDITION in the first bicolon (verses 1a and 1b). Thus the suppliant combines both the legal and military imagery as he calls upon YHWH for deliverance:

- Firstly, YHWH is portrayed as an advocate in verse 1a. The suppliant wants God to be his advocate as implied by the use of the verb רִיב which has strong legal or judicial connotations (e.g. Koehler & Baumgartner, 1958:888-889; Davidson, 1998:119; Williams, 1986:264; Ringgren, 1993:498; Craigie, 1983:286). The same verb is also used in verse 23 where the psalmist makes a petition to God: He wants God to rise up and come to his defence. The root רִיב is also used to describe a quarrel or strife among two or more people (cf. Gen 13:7; 26:20, 22; Ex 21:8) (Bracke, 1997:105). The image is that of a court of law or courtroom. A suit is in progress and the suppliant is being attacked by ruthless witnesses (see verse 11) and he wants God to be his advocate. That is why he says “contend, YHWH, with those who contend with me” (1a). Davidson (1998:119) also observes that Deuteronomy 19:16-17 provides an instructive parallel to רִיב in Psalm 35:1a: “If a malicious witness comes forward to accuse someone of wrongdoing, then both parties to the dispute (רִיב) shall appear before the Lord, before the priests and judges who are in office in those days.” He also points out that in Job 23:2-7, Job is facing the mounting charges of his friends and is determined to lay his case before a trustworthy divine advocate. So the psalmist is in a similar situation and brings his case to YHWH, the divine advocate, who will fight the case for him.
- Secondly, YHWH is portrayed as the divine warrior in verse 1b. The suppliant asks YHWH to fight for him and this is implied by the use of לָחַם (“fight”). The verb לָחַם has a military connotation (Boice, 1994:302; Craigie, 1983:286). The image is that of a battlefield. The psalmist’s enemies are waging war against him, and he wants YHWH to fight (לָחַם) for him (1b), to be “his champion” (Boice, 1994:302). The root לָחַם designates an act of violence by one person, or group against another (Longman 1997a:785). It indicates an act of warfare. As Kaiser (1980:476) observes, most significant usages of לָחַם pertain to YHWH’s role in Israel’s wars. YHWH is portrayed as a warrior, providing Israel with victory over her enemies (cf. Exod 14:14; 15:3; Deut 32:41ff; Jos 10:14; Jer 21:5; Ps 68).

Therefore in the first bicolon (verse 1), the suppliant makes an urgent plea to YHWH to contend and fight for him. To show the urgency of the situation and the fact that the suppliant is in a time of great need of YHWH, two imperatives (from the verbs: רִיב and לָחַם), the vocative

יהוה and a word-play are used to call YHWH to take action. YHWH is also portrayed as an advocate and a warrior.

In the **second bicolon (verse 2)**, **2a** commences with the imperative **הֶחֱזֶק** (“take up”), which is directed to YHWH. The imperative is then followed by **מִגֵּן וְצַנָּה** (“shield and buckler”). The **מִגֵּן וְצַנָּה** are objects or weapons that YHWH is to take up to aid the suppliant. 2a and 2b are syndetically linked together by the conjunction **וְ**.

**2b** commences with the imperative **קוּמָה** (“rise up”) which is directed to YHWH. The imperative (**קוּמָה**) is then followed by the prepositional object **בְּעֵזְרָתִי**<sup>11</sup> (“to my aid”). The prepositional object expresses the purpose of divine intervention. Again the recipient of YHWH’s activity is the suppliant.

The root **קוּם** (“rise, stand up”) in 2b can be used in a legal context and with regard to a military encounter (Gamberoni, 1989:1267-1268). Willis (1990:211) points out that, with regards to YHWH, **קוּם** predominantly occurs in contexts where YHWH rises against his enemies (cf. Ps 68:2; 74:22) or the enemies of his people (cf. Isa 14:22; 31:2; Pss 9:20; 12:6; 44:27). Therefore **קוּם** in this context expresses the suppliant’s desire for YHWH to intervene as the divine warrior and deliverer of his people.

The suppliant appeals to YHWH to take up the shield and buckler and fight for him. The shield and buckler were defensive weapons. The shield was a protective device used in battle to protect the body from the enemy’s sword or arrows and the buckler was a larger shield, probably rectangular, made of wood and leather which would protect the whole body (see Williams, 1986:264; Bratcher & Reyburn, 1991:329; Goldingay, 2007a:491).

In the **third bicolon (verse 3ab)**, **3a** is syndetically linked to 2b by the conjunction **וְ**. In 3a, the conjunction **וְ** is attached to the imperative **הֲרֵק** (“draw out”). The imperative (**הֲרֵק**) is directed to YHWH. The imperative is followed by **חֲנִית וְסֶגֶר** (“spear and pike”). The **חֲנִית וְסֶגֶר** are the weapons that YHWH is to draw out (**הֲרֵק**) to meet the pursuers of the suppliant. The spear was a weapon consisting of a wooden shaft which was mounted on a spear head of stone, bronze or iron. It could be thrown like a javelin. The phrase **חֲנִית וְסֶגֶר** is followed by a prepositional phrase **לְקִרְאָת רִדְפָי** (“to meet my pursuers”). The prepositional phrase consists of a preposition (**לְ**), an infinitive (**קִרְאָת**) and a participle (**רִדְפָי**). The first person common

<sup>11</sup> Several medieval LXX manuscripts translate as if their original text had read **לְעֵזְרָתִי** (εἰς βοήθειάν μου, “for my aid”). But **אֵ** indicates motions toward a goal (see Williams, 1967:49).

singular suffix attached to the participle indicates that YHWH is to draw his weapons against the pursuers of the suppliant. The prepositional phrase (לְקַרְאֵת רִדְפָּי) functions as the purpose why YHWH has to draw out the spear and pike.

**3b** begins with the imperative אָמַר (“say”), which is directed to YHWH. The imperative is followed by the prepositional object לְנַפְשִׁי (“to my soul”), which refers to the psalmist as a whole person (see Bratcher & Reyburn, 1991:35; Anderson, 1972a:277; Davidson, 1998:119). The phrase יִשְׁעֲתֶךָ אֲנִי (“I am your deliverance”) are the words of assurance that the suppliant wants YHWH to say as he comes to fight and deliver him from his pursuers (see Craigie, 1983:286; VanGemeren, 1991:287; Bratcher & Reyburn, 1991:329).

In summary, verse 3b shows that YHWH is the suppliant's deliverance – he contends (1a) in a most concrete way (2b-3a).

As far as coherence or semantic relations are concerned, there are GENERAL-SPECIFIC (also called GENERIC-SPECIFIC, see Beekman & Callow, 1974:69-73) relations between 1b and 2a-3a. Three instances (Specific) of how YHWH must fight (Generic) are mentioned. 1b is a general petition to God to fight on behalf of the suppliant and 2a-3a specifies the kind of weapons that God should use to fight the enemies of the psalmist - he is to fully arm himself with shield, buckler, spear, and pike. Therefore in verse 3, YHWH is also to take offensive weapons, he is to take both the spear and pike. Since these two textual units (1b and 2a-3a) say more or less the same semantically, they are synonymous parallel.

In short, the suppliant in Strophe A (verses 1-3) urgently calls upon YHWH in his time of great need. He wants YHWH to be his advocate and warrior. He appeals to YHWH to use both defensive and offensive weapons against his pursuers. YHWH is portrayed as a warrior, a man of war, who fights on behalf of the suppliant. The psalmist uses the metaphor of warrior when referring to YHWH probably to accentuate that YHWH will help him to overcome the enemy in a concrete way.

It may seem odd for YHWH to take a shield for his own protection, but the psalm includes the idea because it is intrinsic to being a warrior. Thus, even YHWH does not go out to battle without a shield (see Goldingay, 2007a:491). While it is hard to imagine YHWH taking all four weapons, the shield, buckler, spear and the pike at the same time, this is hyperbolic – YHWH is depicted as having the ability to wield different weapons and therefore will certainly bring about the deliverance of the psalmist (Goldingay 2007a:491). The use of the four weapons also accentuates the comprehensiveness of YHWH's imminent attack and victory (Basson, 2005:15).

VanGemeren (1991:287) sees the four weapons as symbolizing God's readiness to defend his own against their enemies. The psalmist anticipates the victory that would come when YHWH comes to his rescue. This deliverance may be that YHWH literally will use weapons to deliver the psalmist, by using human agents. This strophe teaches the listener/reader to urgently call upon YHWH when confronted by a difficult situation rather than relying on himself/herself. YHWH is the divine advocate and warrior. He comes to the defence of his people and he fights their battles. God's people may anticipate victory when YHWH comes to their rescue.

### **2.5.1.2 Strophe B (verses 4-8)**

In relation to Strophe A, Strophe B indicates the consequence of YHWH's intervention described in Strophe A (verses 1-3b). When YHWH fights his enemies, it amounts to shame, dishonour and humiliation (4a-d), dispersion and retreat (5ab, 6ab) and sudden destruction by their own devices (verse 8).

Strophe B (verses 4-8) consists of five bicola (verses 4-7) and a tricolon (verse 8). In this strophe, the suppliant expresses six negative wishes towards his enemies (verses 4ab, 4cd, 5ab, 6ab and 8abc).

In the **first bicolon (verse 4ab)**, 4a commences with the predicate, which functions like a jussive (יִכְלְמוּ וַיִּבְשּׁוּ – “let them be put to shame and dishonour”). This predicate is a negative wish expressed towards the suppliant's enemies, those who were seeking his life (4b). This negative wish is directed as a vocative to YHWH. YHWH is the one who is to put to shame and dishonour the suppliant's enemies. The negative wish contains the following hendiadys: כָּלֵם/בוֹשׁ (“shame/dishonour”).

The negative wish (4a) is then followed by the participial phrase מְבַקְשֵׁי נַפְשִׁי (“who seek my soul”) (4b), which justifies the negative wish in 4a, by implying that the objects of the negative wish in 4a are the suppliant's attackers, who wanted to take the life of the suppliant.

In the **second bicolon (verse 4cd)**, 4c starts with the predicate, which functions like a jussive (יִסְגּוּ אַחֲרָיִם וַיִּחַפְּרוּ – “let them be turned back and humiliated”). Like in the previous colon (4ab), this predicate is a negative wish expressed towards the suppliant's enemies, those who were devising evil against him (4d). The negative wish is directed as a vocative to YHWH. YHWH is the one who is to turn back and shame the suppliant's enemies. The negative wish

contains the following pair of verbs with similar meaning (or even a hendiadys): חָפַר/סוּג ("turned back/ humiliated").

The negative wish (4c) is then followed by the participial phrase חֹשְׁבֵי רָעָתִי ("who devise evil against me") (4d), which justifies the negative wish in 4c, by implying that the objects of the negative wish in 4c are the suppliant's attackers, who were plotting evil against the suppliant.

As far as coherence or semantic relations are concerned, there is also a synonymous parallelism, BASE-RESTATEMENT in 4c and 4a. 4c is parallel to 4a. The expression יִסְגּוּ אָחֹר וַיִּחְפְּרוּ חֹשְׁבֵי רָעָתִי ("let them be turned back and humiliated who devise evil against me!") (4c) is parallel and corresponds to יִבְשׁוּ וְיִכְלְמוּ מִבְּקָשֵׁי נַפְשִׁי ("let them be put to shame and dishonour who seek my soul") (4a-b).

In both 4a and 4c, the psalmist wants his enemies to experience shame, dishonour and humiliation. Shame and dishonour were a result of defeat and humiliation (see Clifford, 2002:178). The verb בּוֹשׁ ("shame") is used idiomatically: it implies losing face completely. The verb stresses public disgrace which is a physical state (Oswalt, 1980a:97; Bratcher & Reyburn, 1991:329). The phrase יִסְגּוּ אָחֹר ("turned back") in 4c is a military figure which means to be driven back, to be pushed back or to retreat (see Bratcher & Reyburn, 1991:330; Feuer, 1985:424). Feuer (1985:424) observes that this turning back "is more intense than shame, but it is a turnabout which comes from the person's own realisation of his defects." Feuer (1985:424) argues that the verb חָפַר ("humiliated") is related to the root חָפַר ("to dig") and suggests that the victim is humiliated to the extent that he desires to bury himself. However, Gamberoni (1998:107-109) and Brown *et al* (1979:343-344) distinguish between roots חָפַר (I) and חָפַר (II), being mere homophones, respectively meaning "to dig" and "to be ashamed." The psalmist's enemies were devising evil (4d) and were plotting to kill the psalmist (4b). Therefore, in verse 4, the suppliant wants YHWH to ensure that his enemies experience shame, dishonour and humiliation as a result of their defeat.

In the **third bicolon (verse 5)**, 5a is a predicate consisting of an introductory phrase לְפָנֵי־רוּחַ ("before the wind") which functions like a jussive and a prepositional phrase יִהְיוּ כְּמִין ("let them be chaff") which compares the suppliant's enemies "to chaff before the wind." Chaff is the husk of harvested grain that is separated from the useful kernel by beating or running over the grain with a sledge. The grain is then tossed into the air by a winnowing shovel during a breeze. The

grain falls to the ground and the chaff (or, straw) is blown away by the wind (Wilson, 2002:580; Bratcher & Reyburn, 1991:20). Before the wind, chaff is helpless and worthless. It is of no value and is at the mercy of the wind which blows it away. The same is true with the suppliant's enemies before YHWH – they are helpless, worthless and dispersed just like chaff before the wind. This phrase *כְּמוֹץ לְפָנֵי יָרוּחַ* recalls Psalm 1:4, “Not so the wicked! They are like chaff that the wind blows away,” which implies that the suppliant's pursuers were wicked men (see McCann, 1996:819). The suppliant wants his enemies to be like chaff before the wind, with the angel of YHWH driving them.

**5b** is a participial clause, which consists of the subject, *מִלְאָךְ יְהוָה* (“angel of YHWH”) and the participle *דוֹחָה* (“driving”). The angel of YHWH is the one who drives the suppliant's enemies.

In the **fourth bicolon (verse 6)**, **6a** begins with the jussive form of the verb *הָיָה* which is attached to the prepositional noun *בְּדַרְכָּם* (“their way”) which functions as the subject of the colon. The suppliant's enemies are thought of as being on the psalmist's trail. The jussive *יְהִי דַרְכָּם* is followed by *חֹשֶׁךְ וְחֻלְקֵלְקוֹת* (“be dark and slippery”) which functions as the predicate of the colon (6a). Dahood (1966:211) views the two nouns, *חֹשֶׁךְ* and *חֻלְקֵלְקוֹת* as names of Sheol: “darkness and destruction.” However, this is not likely the primary meaning of the terms (Bratcher & Reyburn 1991:331; Anderson, 1972a:278). The imagery of being in a “dark and slippery path” (6a) is similar to the one in Jer 13:16, “Give glory to the LORD your God before he brings the darkness, before your feet stumble on the darkening hills. You hope for light, but he will turn it to thick darkness and change it to deep gloom.” The word *חֻלְקֵלְקוֹת* is also used in Ps 73:18, “Surely you place them on slippery ground; you cast them down to ruin” where it describes the destiny of the wicked.

**6b** is a participial clause, which consists of the subject, *מִלְאָךְ יְהוָה* (“angel of YHWH”) and the participle *רֹדְפֵם* (“pursuing them”). **6b** (*וּמִלְאָךְ יְהוָה דוֹחָה*) and **5b** (*וּמִלְאָךְ יְהוָה רֹדְפֵם*) are nearly identical, thereby emphasizing the role of the angel of YHWH. The participles seem to indicate the reason or rationale for what befalls the enemies.

The phrase *מִלְאָךְ יְהוָה* (“angel of YHWH”) only appears in the Psalms here in verses 5 and 6 and in Psalm 34:7. The *מִלְאָךְ יְהוָה* refers to God's heavenly messenger. This angel cares for and protects God's people (see Exod 23:20; Josh 5:13-15). The suppliant prays for his enemies' path to be dark and slippery with the angel of YHWH pursuing them (verse 6).

With regards to the identity of מַלְאֲכַי יְהוָה (“the angel of YHWH”), מַלְאֲכַי יְהוָה is perhaps a very specific angel. Some scholars (e.g. Kautzsch, 1911:83-87; Ficker, 1997:671) argue that the מַלְאֲכַי יְהוָה is a creaturely messenger who acts in the name and on the commission of God. Other scholars (e.g. Bowling, 1980:465; Boice, 1994:303) argue that מַלְאֲכַי יְהוָה is the pre-incarnate manifestation of the second person of the Trinity, the Lord Jesus Christ. He is first mentioned as coming to Hagar in the wilderness and Hagar calls the angel “the God who sees me” (Gen 16:13), thereby identifying him as more than an angel (Gen 16:13). The מַלְאֲכַי יְהוָה seems to be the same angel who appeared to Abraham in Gen 22:11 and stopped Abraham from sacrificing his son. Probably the same angel appeared to Abraham earlier to announce the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, though the exact phrase מַלְאֲכַי יְהוָה is not used in Gen 18 (see Boice, 1994:303). Of the three heavenly beings in the story, two are called “angels” but the third is repeatedly referred to as יְהוָה (Gen 18:1, 10, 13, 17, 20, 22, 33). The מַלְאֲכַי יְהוָה seems to be the same figure that appeared to Joshua before the battle of Jericho (Josh 5:14-15) (Bowling, 1980:465; Boice, 1994:303). The identity of the מַלְאֲכַי יְהוָה is not crucial for the understanding of this Psalm and the issue is not pursued further.

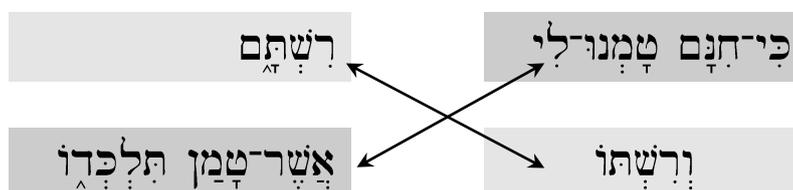
The **fifth bicolon (verse 7)**, begins with the conjunction כִּי (“for”) which gives the justification or rationale for the preceding as well as subsequent imprecations directed at the enemies of the suppliant. The conjunction is attached to the adverb חֲנָם (“without cause”). For no reason, the enemies hid a net for the suppliant (7a). The same idea of 7a – that the psalmist’s enemies had prepared a trap for him - is repeated in 7b. Both the net and the pit are metaphors for how the enemies threaten the suppliant. The purpose of the repetition is to emphasize to the reader/listener that the suppliant was truly innocent and that the attackers had no valid reason for trying to harm him since he had done nothing against them (verses 11-18 and verses 19-28 elaborate this point in detail). In this bicolon (verse 7), the subject is the suppliant’s enemies. The victim of the enemies is the suppliant. The suppliant’s enemies in 7ab are represented as hunters planning to catch their victim in their nets or pits [“They hid their net for me...they dug a pit for my soul”]. In Israelite culture, wild animals were caught by causing them to fall into pits dug in the ground, while nets were used to catch birds, fish, or small animals (see Bratcher & Reyburn, 1991:94).

In the **tricolon verse (verse 8)**, 8a begins with the predicate which functions like a jussive (תְּבוֹאֵהוּ שׂוֹאֵה - “let destruction come”). This predicate is a request directed to YHWH. The noun שׂוֹאֵה (“destruction”) in 8a acts as the subject of the predicate. The noun (שׂוֹאֵה) is followed by

the negated verb לֹא־יֵדַע (“unexpectedly”). The phrase לֹא־יֵדַע alludes to the net and the pit, since the enemies had set a trap which the suppliant did not foresee.

**8b** is syndetically linked to 8a by the conjunction ׀. The colon commences with the noun רֶשֶׁת (“the net”) which functions as the subject of the colon. The noun (רֶשֶׁת) is followed by the relative clause אֲשֶׁר־טָמַן (“which he hid”), which specifies the particular net that should catch (לכד) the suppliant’s enemy– that is the same net which he had hidden for the suppliant.

**8c** is syndetically linked to 8b, because the phrase (בְּשׂוֹאָה יִפֹּל־בָּהּ) restates the same idea that occurs in 8b – that the suppliant’s enemy should fall into the very destruction (i.e. net) that he had planned for the suppliant. It is interesting to note that 8a has שׂוֹאָה (“destruction”) as the subject of the colon, whereas 8b has רֶשֶׁת (“net”) as the subject and 8c brings the two nouns together. The noun שׂוֹאָה (“destruction”) occurs in 8c and the noun רֶשֶׁת (“net”) is implied by the preposition בָּהּ which has a 3<sup>rd</sup> person feminine singular suffix related to the noun רֶשֶׁת (“net”) which is also feminine singular. This shows that the destruction that the suppliant wants to come upon his enemies is related to the net that the enemy had prepared for the suppliant. The suppliant prays for the one who hid the net for him to be caught by it. The “net” metaphor refers to crafty plans for destruction (Maclaren, 1893:338; Domeris, 1997b:1206). The psalmist wants his enemy to be caught in his own treachery: “Let destruction come upon him unexpectedly. And let the net which he hid catch him, into that very destruction let him fall” (8). This is a *lex talionis* (cf. Pss 9:15, 16; 57:6; 141:10), which demands a similar fate for those who set a trap for others. The chiasm in 7a and 8b highlights or emphasizes the point that the psalmist wants his enemies to be caught up in their own treachery, in the very trap they had intended for the psalmist.



When YHWH allows the wicked to be trapped in their own deeds, he shows himself to be the just judge (see Bratcher & Reyburn, 1991:94).

In summary, Strophe *B* (verses 4-8) shows the consequence of YHWH’s intervention described in Strophe *A* (verses 1-3b). When YHWH fights, the suppliant’s enemies experience shame, dishonour, humiliation, dispersion, retreat and sudden destruction by their own devices.

This strophe implies that YHWH will defend the innocent who are wrongly accused and persecuted. Secondly, unjustified persecution of the righteous by the wicked is futile and unsuccessful before YHWH.

### **2.5.1.3 Strophe C (verses 9-10)**

Strophe C (verses 9-10) consists of a bicolon (verse 9) and a tricolon (verse 10) . The whole strophe is a promise to praise YHWH for his help (verses 9-10). This strophe concludes the first stanza (verses 1-10) of Psalm 35. In terms of semantic relations, verses 9-10 express the consequence of what precedes. The fact that YHWH let the enemies experience what they had in store for the suppliant, leads to this song of praise. Verses 9-10 are the psalmist's personal response to the anticipated salvation of YHWH (cf. 35:3, 9), in which he vows to rejoice and praise YHWH for his goodness.

The **bicolonic verse (verse 9)** commences with the conjunction ׀, which syndetically links verse 9 to the preceding strophe (verses 4-8). The conjunction ׀ at the beginning of a new strophe (verses 9-10) indicates a new idea, and alludes to the result of the content of the preceding strophe (verses 4-8) (see Van der Merwe *et al*, 1999:298-299). **9a** commences with נַפְשִׁי ("my soul") which functions as the subject of the colon. In normal Hebrew syntax the subject is placed after the verb, which would suggest that here the subject (נַפְשִׁי) is being emphasized. The noun נַפְשִׁי ("my soul") refers to the suppliant himself as a whole and not to a part of himself. The noun נַפְשִׁי is followed by the imperfect verb תִּגִּיל ("will rejoice"), which, in the present context, denotes continuous action in the future. The object of the suppliant's rejoicing is YHWH.

**9b** begins with the verb תִּשְׂשֵׁי ("it will exult") which refers to the suppliant himself. "Exult" (שׂוּשׂ) in 9b is a synonym of "rejoice" (גִּיל) in 9a. The imperfect verb תִּשְׂשֵׁי in the present context denotes continuous action in the future. The imperfect verb is then followed by the phrase בְּיִשׁוּעָתוֹ ("in his deliverance"). This phrase בְּיִשׁוּעָתוֹ refers to YHWH's deliverance.

As far as coherence or semantic relations are concerned, there is a synonymous parallelism, BASE-AMPLIFICATION between verses 9a and 9b. The first colon (9a) has a general vow/promise to rejoice in YHWH and the second colon (9b) expands that by giving the subject or topic of the suppliant's rejoicing in YHWH, thus YHWH's deliverance (יִשׁוּעָה). It is significant

to note that the downfall of the enemies (which the psalmist asked for) translates into deliverance. Therefore, the psalmist is not looking for the downfall for the sake of vengeance but because this is necessary to bring release and reprieve (see Goldingay, 2007a:494; Kroll, 1987:103).

The idea of praising God in verse 9 is also extended in the **tricollic verse (verse 10)**. 10abc indicates the manner in which 9ab is conducted: the way that the suppliant will rejoice and exult in YHWH. The suppliant will rejoice and exult in YHWH (9ab) by saying (with all his bones!) that YHWH is incomparable and that he delivers the afflicted and the powerless from their oppressors (10abc). The deliverance of 9b is explicated in 10bc. נַפֶּשׁ (“soul”) in 9a and עֲצָמוֹ (“bones”) in 10a are synonyms which both emphasize ‘I’ or ‘myself’ (see Kidner, 1973:143; Goldingay, 2007a:494). With his whole being, as implied by כָּל עֲצָמוֹתַי (“all my bones”), the suppliant will testify of YHWH’s deliverance. There is also a rhetorical question in 10a, יְהוָה מִי כָמוֹךָ (“YHWH, who is like you?”; cf. Ps 18:32; 71:19; 77:14; 89:9; 113:5), with the obvious answer “No one!” Goldingay (2007a:494) observes that the rhetorical question (“YHWH, who is like you?”) “recurs in connection with the declarations of the way YHWH acts to deliver people who pray (e.g. Pss 71:19; 86:8) and the way YHWH acted in the creation and in Israel’s history (e.g. Ps 89:8 [9]; Exod 15:11; 1 Chron 17:20). It sets YHWH off over against gods that could be represented by lifeless images (Jer 10:5-7).” Gerstenberger (1988:151) sees the rhetorical question (“YHWH, who is like you?”) as a liturgical shout pointing to the incomparability of the saviour God (cf. Exod 15:11). Goldingay (2007a:495) also sees the rhetorical question (“YHWH, who is like you?”) as recalling the exodus faith (Exod 15:3, 11). The rhetorical question implies that there is no one like YHWH and this is elucidated in 10bc and at the same time this is a specific explanation of what YHWH’s deliverance (יְשׁוּעָה) in 9b involves. YHWH is unique because of his concern for the plight of the afflicted and the powerless. He is a God of action, a warrior, who delivers the afflicted and needy from their powerful oppressors (verse 10b and 10c). Therefore, 10bc gives the reason for the statement/exclamation in 10a (that YHWH is incomparable).

The root חִזַּק that appears in 2a, also appears in 10b. In 2a, the root is used in reference to YHWH, the warrior, who is to take (חִזַּק, *hiphil*) the shield and buckler and fight for the psalmist. In 10b, the root is used as an adjectival noun, the “stronger one” (חִזְקוֹ), the antagonist whom YHWH delivers the weak from. The implication here is that God is a warrior who delivers the weak from those who are strong, those who oppress them.

In a nutshell, the suppliant in Strophe C (verses 9-10) vows to continuously rejoice and praise YHWH in response to the anticipated deliverance by YHWH. The object of the suppliant's rejoicing is not the downfall of his enemies, but YHWH's salvation (or deliverance). With his whole being, the suppliant will testify of YHWH's saving grace because there no one like him. YHWH is concerned with the plight of the afflicted and powerless. YHWH is a God of action, a warrior, who delivers the afflicted and the needy from their powerful oppressors. Secondly, in the midst of difficulties or persecution, the readers should testify to YHWH's deliverance because there is no one like him. Thirdly, this strophe implicitly encourages the readers to trust in YHWH for their deliverance, in the midst of difficulties or persecution.

### **2.5.2 Stanza II (verses 11-18): The Trial**

Stanza II (verses 11-18) develops the first image of a court of law or courtroom in 1a. A suit is in progress and the psalmist is being attacked by ruthless or violent witnesses (עֵרֵי חֲמָס). He wants God to be his advocate. This stanza (verses 11-18) elaborates on the idea in verse 7 that the psalmist is innocent and that his enemies have no valid reason for inflicting harm on him.

#### **2.5.2.1 Strophe D (verses 11-12)**

Strophe D (verses 11-12) serves as the introduction of Stanza 2. The strophe introduces and describes the dilemma that the suppliant was facing. This is a courtroom scene, where the enemies were making false accusations against the suppliant (verse 11). They repaid evil for good and this affected the suppliant's soul (verse 12).

This strophe (verses 11-12) consists of two bicola. In the **first bicolon (verse 11)**, 11a commences with יִקְוֹמוּן (‘‘rise up’’) which describes the activity of the subject עֵרֵי חֲמָס (‘‘violent witnesses’’) (Brown *et al*, 1979:729). The verb קָוַם (‘‘arise’’) describes a scenario where the violent witnesses testify against the suppliant in a lawsuit (cf. Ps 27:12) (Amsler, 1997:1139; Briggs & Briggs, 1906:305). This explains why the suppliant would want YHWH to rise up (קְוֹמָה) to his aid in 2b. The noun חֲמָס describes the moral characteristics of the suppliant's enemies who are ‘‘hostile witnesses’’ (see Bratcher & Reyburn, 1991:332). The phrase עֵרֵי חֲמָס seems to imply that the witnesses are making false accusations against the suppliant (see Haag, 1998:484), thereby proving themselves to be his enemies.

**11b** is syndetically linked to 11a. 11b may be a restatement or an expansion of 11a. 11b starts with **אֲשֶׁר לֹא־יָדַעְתִּי** (“what I do not know”) and is followed by **יִשְׁאַלּוּנִי** (“they ask me”). The expression **אֲשֶׁר לֹא־יָדַעְתִּי יִשְׁאַלּוּנִי** (“what I do not know, they ask me”) in 11b implies that the suppliant’s enemies are accusing him of things or events he knows nothing about – a sure sign of the psalmist’s innocence. The subject of **יִשְׁאַלּוּנִי** is the suppliant’s violent witnesses (**עֲדֵי חֲמָס**). The victim of the violent witnesses is the suppliant. Therefore, the “violent witnesses” were giving testimony against the psalmist in an outrageous, lawless way that aims to bring about bloodshed (Goldingay, 2007a:495; Wilson, 2002:581). This kind of testimony was forbidden in the law (cf. Exod 23:1). When violent or ruthless witnesses were found out, the punishment was severe; the penalty that would have been imposed on the innocent party was to be carried out on the witness instead (Deut 19:16-19) (see Wilson, 2002:581). The intent of the attackers is to destroy the psalmist (Eaton, 2003:159), that is why they are called “violent” witnesses in 11a.

In the **second bicolon (verse 12)**, **12a** commences with the verb **יִשְׁלְמוּנִי** (“they repay me”). The subject of **יִשְׁלְמוּנִי** is the suppliant’s malicious witnesses (**עֲדֵי חֲמָס**). The verb (**יִשְׁלְמוּנִי**) is followed by **רָעָה תַחַת טוֹבָה** (“evil for good”). The expression **רָעָה תַחַת טוֹבָה** portrays the wickedness of the suppliant’s enemies. The suppliant did good deeds to his enemies, but instead of reciprocating good with good, they returned evil for good. The suppliant’s enemies returned ingratitude for sympathy and kindness (see verses 13-14).

**12b** is asyndetically linked to 12a. In 12a, the suppliant’s enemies return evil for good and the actions of the enemies causes the suppliant’s soul to grieve or forlorn in 12b. The events that occur in 12a have a causal effect on the events in 12b. Therefore 12b is the consequence of 12a. The enemies’ behaviour in 12a causes the suppliant’s soul to experience unfathomable bereavement (**שְׂכֹל**) in 12b. The noun **שְׂכֹל** literally denotes the loss of children, often a consequence of war (cf. 137:8-9; Isa 47:8-9) (Holladay, 1988:369; Brown *et al*, 1979:1013; Briggs & Briggs, 1906:305; McCann, 1996:819). Therefore, **שְׂכֹל** in 12b denotes serious emotional pain, like that of a parent who grieves over the death of a child, caused by the suppliant’s enemies.

In short, Strophe *D* (11-12) describes a lawsuit scene, where violent witnesses stand up against the suppliant, falsely testifying against the suppliant in an outrageous way with the purpose of harming and discrediting the suppliant. The suppliant is innocent and has no clue as

to the false allegations made by his enemies. The suppliant has done good deeds to his enemies but they have returned evil for good and this has caused the suppliant's heart to experience deep emotional pain.

### **2.5.2.2 Strophe E (verses 13-14)**

Strophe E (verses 13-14) describes the suppliant's response to his enemies' misfortune. In this strophe, the suppliant declares his innocence, although there is no claim against God in this case. The suppliant only insists on personal guiltlessness in comparison with the hostile environment (Gerstenberger, 1988:152). The suppliant declares that he is not guilty of any specific wrong doing against his enemies by contrasting his own conduct (verses 13-14) with that of his enemies (verses 15-16). This strophe consists of a tricolon (13abc) and a bicolon (14ab).

The **tricolitic verse (verse 13)** begins with the conjunction וְ which can be translated as “but” because the suppliant's conduct is being contrasted emphatically with that of his enemies. The KJV, NASB and NJB follow this approach and they translate the conjunction וְ as “but.” In **13a**, the conjunction וְ is attached to the emphatic pronoun אֲנִי (“as for me”) which is followed by בְּחִלּוֹתָם לְבוּשֵׁי שָׂק (‘‘when they were sick my clothing was sackcloth’’). The phrase אֲנִי בְּחִלּוֹתָם is a circumstantial clause indicating a specific incident (when the enemies were ill). It introduces the circumstances in which the next five actions of the suppliant are performed (verses 13a-14b). The infinitive construct (חִלּוֹתָם) refers to the suppliant's enemies. The infinitive construct is followed by לְבוּשֵׁי שָׂק (‘‘my clothing was sackcloth’’), which is the suppliant's response to the sickness of his enemies. Wearing sackcloth (שָׂק) and fasting (צוֹם) were ways of expressing deep grief. To sum up verse 13a, when his enemies were sick, the suppliant made sackcloth his clothing.

**13b** begins with עֲנִיתִי (‘‘I afflict’’) which refers to the activity of the suppliant. The verb עֲנִיתִי is followed by בְּצוֹם נַפְשִׁי (‘‘my soul with fasting’’). To summarize verse 13b, the suppliant afflicted himself with fasting.

As far as coherence or semantic relations are concerned, 13a and 13b belong together, they are signs of mourning or grief. The two colons reflect two instances of the generic concept of mourning or grief (wearing sackcloth and fasting).

**13c** introduces prayer. 13c is syndetically linked to 13ab by the conjunction וְ. The conjunction is attached to תְּפִלָּתִי (‘‘my prayer’’). The noun תְּפִלָּתִי (‘‘my prayer’’) refers to the

prayer of the suppliant. The noun **תְּפִלָּתִי** is followed by **עַל־חֵיקִי** (“to my bosom”) which refers to the suppliant’s bosom. The verb **תָּשׁוּב** (“kept returning”) describes the movement of the suppliant’s prayer – it kept on returning back to him.

The meaning of the expression **וּתְפִלָּתִי עַל־חֵיקִי תָשׁוּב** (“and my prayer kept returning to my bosom”) in 13c is unclear. There is much disagreement over the meaning of 13c among scholars.

- Some scholars (e.g. Kissane, 1953:155) take the verse to mean unceasing, repeated prayers. They would argue that there is a textual corruption and would propose that **חֵיקִי** (“my bosom”) be emended to **חֵיקִי** (“my mouth”). Thus 13c would be translated as: “and my prayer kept on returning upon my mouth” (i.e. “I kept on praying for them”).
- Other scholars (e.g. Kraus, 1988:394) take the verse as parenthetical, expressing the wish that his prayer for them not be answered. The NEB and NIV link 13c with verse 14, “When my prayer came back unanswered, I walked with my head bowed...” (NEB).
- Briggs & Briggs (1906:306) argue that the expression is probably a metonymy, reflecting the way one beat one’s chest or bosom in prayer (cf. Nah 2:7[8]).

Although the meaning of **וּתְפִלָּתִי עַל־חֵיקִי תָשׁוּב** (“and my prayer kept returning to my bosom”) in 13c is uncertain, it is clear from the context that the suppliant prayed for his enemies to be healed.

To sum up verse 13, the suppliant wore sackcloth, fasted and prayed for his enemies to be healed when they were sick. Whether all the enemies were ill at the same time, whether this is a metaphorical description of the psalmist’s blameless behaviour, or even whether this reflects a beneficent attitude toward the accusers, is uncertain (Wilson, 2002:582).

In the **bicollic verse (verse 14)**, **14a** commences with the phrase **כִּרְעֵ־כַפָּאֵחַ לִי** (“as if for a friend or brother”) and is followed by **הִתְהַלַּכְתִּי** (“I walked about”), which refers to the activity of the suppliant.

**14b** begins with **כַּאֲבֵל־אִם** (“as if mourning like a mother”). The phrase **כַּאֲבֵל־אִם** consists of a preposition (**כַּ**), an adjective (**אֲבֵל**) and a noun (**אִם**). The phrase **כַּאֲבֵל־אִם** is followed by the participle **קָדַר** (“gloomy”) and then the verb **שָׁחֹתִי** (“I bowed down”). The participle functions as an adverb and modifies **שָׁחֹתִי** (“I bowed down”). **קָדַר** probably refers to dark clothing or smearing with dirt or the face of the mourner, that had lost its glow and seemed darker because of pain and anguish (Brown *et al*, 1979:871; Feuer, 1985:429; Holladay, 1988:313). There is an incomplete parallelism which is indicative of an ellipsis in 14a and 14b, such that the adjective

אָבֵל (“mourning”) in 14b is missing in 14a, but should be read as if present to get the full sense of the sentence. Therefore, 14a can be read as “as if [*mourning*] for a friend or brother, I walked about”. The suppliant mourned for his enemies as if they were his friends and brothers (14a) and as a mother who mourns for the loss of her child (14b). Goldingay (2007a:497) observes that the verb הִתְהַלַּכְתִּי (“I walked about”) closes the first colon (14a) and raises the question “how?” This is answered by קָרַר שְׁחוֹתַי (“I bowed down gloomily”) at the end of the second colon (14b). Similarly, the expression אָבֵל “one mourning” in 14b explicates the בָּ expression in 14a כַּרְעֵ-כְּאַחַּד (“like [one mourning] a friend, like [one mourning] a brother”). That second בָּ expression intensifies the first, with its reference not merely to one mourning a friend or brother but to a mother mourning the loss of her child. The way the suppliant walked about is compared to the way one mourns for a friend or brother in 14a. The way the psalmist bowed down is compared to a mother mourning for her lost child in 14b. The purpose of the comparison is to show that the suppliant was grieved over the illness of his enemies as much as he would have grieved over the death of the nearest kin, friend, brother or child.

Williams (1986:267) suggests that verses 13-14 imply that the psalmist’s attackers were former friends or companions. It is also possible that the suppliant’s attackers were not his former friends or companions. The depths of the sincere suffering that the suppliant endures in interceding for those who were not even close friends or relatives heightens the sense of amazement and offense at the opponents’ baseless attacks (Wilson, 2002:582).

In a nutshell, Strophe *E* (verses 13-14) declares the suppliant’s innocence by contrasting his conduct with that of his enemies. When his enemies were sick, the suppliant grieved over their illness as much as he would have grieved over the death of the nearest kin. The suppliant expressed his deep grief by wearing sackcloth, fasting and praying for his enemies’ healing. This strophe implicitly teaches the reader/listener to have a deep love for his enemies, to pray and fast for them when they are facing troubles or difficulties, rather than rejoicing in their misfortunes (cf. Matt 5:44; Luke 6:26).

### **2.5.2.3 Strophe F (verses 15-16)**

Strophe *F* (verses 15-16) describes the attackers’ response to the suppliant’s misfortune. Though the suppliant expressed deep sympathy for his enemies’ misfortunes (verses 13-14),

his enemies do not do the same for him. On the contrary, their conduct is opposite to the suppliant's (verses 15-16). This strophe consists of a tricolon and a bicolon.

In the **tricolitic verse (verse 15)**, **15a** begins with a conjunction ו which can be translated “but” because the enemies’ conduct is being contrasted with that of the suppliant’s (verses 13-14) in this strophe. The KJV, NASB and NIV follow this approach in translating the conjunction ו as “but.” The conjunction ו is attached to the phrase בַּצִּלְעִי (‘‘when I stumbled’’), which consists of the preposition בַּ and the noun צִלְעַע (‘‘limp or stumble’’). The noun צִלְעַע is normally used with reference to a wounded animal, an animal that limps in pain, but in 15a the noun is a figure of speech describing disaster (see Anderson, 1972a:282). The noun (צִלְעַע) describes the misfortune or disaster or a moment of vulnerability encountered by the suppliant. The word/phrase וּבַצִּלְעִי is a circumstantial expression indicating a specific incident (when the psalmist stumbled). It introduces the circumstances in which the next four actions of the enemies are performed (verse 15a-c). The phrase וּבַצִּלְעִי is followed by the two verbs שָׂמְחוּ וַנִּאָּסְפוּ (‘‘they rejoiced and gathered together’’) which describes the activity of the suppliant’s attackers. The suppliant’s enemies rejoiced and gathered together, taking advantage of his moment of vulnerability.

**15b** explicates how the enemies gathered – they gathered against the suppliant. The verb נִאָּסְפוּ (‘‘they gathered together’’) describes the activity of the psalmist’s attackers. The repetition of נִאָּסְפוּ (‘‘gather together’’) also has a poetic ring and the rhetorical function of underlining. It may even be dittography, but there is no text critical evidence for that. The verb נִאָּסְפוּ is then followed by the prepositional object עָלַי (‘‘against me’’) which shows that the suppliant was the victim of his attackers. The word עָלַי (‘‘against me’’) (15b) expresses the indirect object of the verb נִאָּסְפוּ (‘‘they gathered together’’). Therefore, 15a-b shows that the enemies completely surrounded the suppliant and there was no way for the suppliant to evade the attacks of his accusers. Wilson (2002:582) echoes this point when he says ‘‘like vultures gathering around a fallen animal, waiting for an opportunity of weakness, the opponents are delighted when the suppliant stumbles.’’ There is no indication from the text of a moral failure by the suppliant which his enemies could use to justify their attack – only a moment of vulnerability (Wilson, 2002:582).

**15c** commences with the adjective נִכְיִם (‘‘smilers’’), which shows that the suppliant’s enemies were smilers (נִכְיִם). The adjective נִכְיִם is followed by וְלֹא יָרַעְתִּי (‘‘[whom] I did not

know”), a relative clause probably indicating that the suppliant did not know his attackers. Some translations (BBE) take the phrase **וְלֹא יָדַעְתִּי** as parenthesis. It refers back to the same phrase in 11b and echoes that occurrence. Maybe the author only wants to say: Smilers (and I do not know what it is all about!). The phrase **וְלֹא יָדַעְתִּי** is followed by **וְלֹא־דָמּוּ** (“they tore [me] apart and would not be silent”) which describes the activity of the smilers. The verb **קָרַע** (“tear”) is used elsewhere of tearing clothes (Num 14:6; 2 Sam 3:31; Jer 36:24.). Kraus (1988:391) sees the phrase **קָרַעוּ** in 15c as too strong and hardly correct in this context, so he prefers **קָרַצוּ** [“pinch their eyes shut” cf. verse 19 or **קָרְאוּ** (“cry out”)]. However, in the context of Psalm 35, the phrase **קָרַעוּ** (“they tore [me] apart”) should be understood figuratively (Dahood, 1966:214). The phrase seems to refer to the effects of slander on the psalmist (i.e. the psalmist was torn apart like a wild animal by his attackers’ unwarranted slanderous accusations) (Coppes, 1980e:816). The phrase **וְלֹא־דָמּוּ** (“and would not be silent”) supports the interpretation that the accusers were attacking the psalmist verbally rather than physically. The attackers would not stop accusing the psalmist. The phrases **וְלֹא יָדַעְתִּי** and **וְלֹא־דָמּוּ** in 15c in some way correspond with each other: I do not know, they do not keep silent. Both phrases begin with **וְלֹא** and contain a word/verb in the suffix conjugation (i.e. perfect form).

In the **bicollic verse (verse 16)**, **16a** (**בְּחִנְפֵי לַעֲנֵי מְעֹוג - “with godless mockers at a feast”**) shows that the attackers (i.e. the smilers in 15c) teamed together with godless mockers at a feast in their ruthless, ribald behaviour toward the suppliant.

**16b** describes the attackers’ behaviour toward the suppliant **חָרַק עָלַי שְׁנֵימוֹ** (“they gnash their teeth against me”), which depicts the anger, hatred and aggression of the smilers towards the suppliant (Foukes, 1997:288). As Wilson (2002:583) suggests, this expression is “an equivalent of the phrase ‘baring the fangs’ like a beast of prey, either in anger or in anticipation of tearing into a victim”. The attackers expressed anger and anticipated tearing the suppliant just like angry animals which snarl and show their teeth. The imagery in verses 15a-17c is that of animals (e.g. wild dogs) encircling, attacking and gnarling at a wounded animal which has stumbled and does not know what is going on. The suppliant’s enemies are even referred to as “lions” in verse 17 because of their devastating characteristics.

In summary, Strophe *F* (verses 15-16) describes the attackers’ response to the suppliant’s misfortune. Although, the suppliant had expressed deep sympathy for his enemies (in verses 13-14), when they stumbled, the attackers did not do the same for him. They surrounded him

and they continually tore him apart with unwarranted, slanderous accusations. They expressed their anger and hatred ruthlessly toward him.

As far as coherence or semantic relations are concerned, at a strophic level, there is an antithetic parallelism, BASE-CONTRAST pattern between Strophes *D* (11a-12b), *E* (13a-14b) and *F* (15a-16b), with *E* (13a-14b) in the middle. The adversaries' actions are contrasted with the behaviour of the psalmist. Such a double contrast effects an inclusion. The repetition of **וְלֹא יִרְעֵתִי** in 11b and 15c indicate that Strophes *D* (11a-12b) and *F* (15a-16b) form the outer parts of an inclusion.

#### **2.5.2.4 Strophe G (verses 17-18)**

Strophe *G* (verses 17-18) contains a renewed appeal which is parallel to Strophe *A* (verses 1a-3b) and a promise to give thanks and praise to YHWH in the assembly which is parallel to Strophe *C* (verses 9-10). Therefore Stanza II (verses 11-18) parallels Stanza I (verses 1-10) in this respect. In Strophe *G* (verses 17-18), the suppliant makes a plea to YHWH to intervene and deliver him from his predicament and vows to give thanks and praise to YHWH in the assembly. This strophe (verses 17-18) concludes the second stanza (verses 11-18) of Psalm 35. The strophe consists of a tricolon (verse 17) and a bicolon (verse 18).

In the **tricolonic verse (verse 17)**, **17a** begins with the invocation and vocative **אֲדֹנָי** ("my Lord"), a personal call to God to listen or intervene. The vocative **אֲדֹנָי** ("my Lord") is the subject of 17a. The invocation is followed by the petition which is in the form of a rhetorical question **כַּמָּוֶה תִּרְאֶה** ("how long will you look on?"). The rhetorical question (**כַּמָּוֶה תִּרְאֶה**) shows some dejection and loss of hope on the part of the psalmist and serves to move YHWH to action. The suppliant questions whether YHWH will continue to be a mere spectator or will rescue him from his attackers.

**17b** commences with the imperative **הַשִּׁיבָה** ("rescue"), which is directed as vocative to **אֲדֹנָי** ("my Lord") in 17a. The use of the imperative implies that the suppliant does not want God to delay any longer in delivering him from his unhappy situation but wants him to act fast in saving him. In certain contexts (such as Ps 35:17) **שׁוּב** in the *hiphil* means to rescue, to "turn back from" someone or something, or to "turn to" someone or something (Hamilton, 1980e:909; Koehler & Baumgartner, 1958:951). The imperative **הַשִּׁיבָה** ("rescue") in 17b conveys the idea of

revival and resuscitation. The suppliant calls YHWH to 'bring him back' from the jaws of death (Basson, 2005:16). The imperative הַשִּׁיבָה is followed by נַפְשִׁי ("my soul"), which is the object of YHWH's deliverance. The suppliant wants his life to be rescued from his attackers. The noun נַפְשִׁי is followed by the phrase מִשְׂאִיָּהֶם ("from their devastation"), which refers to the devastating effect of the enemies' deeds towards the suppliant. There is an incomplete parallelism in 17b and c. The imperative הַשִּׁיבָה ("rescue") in 17b is omitted in 17c, but should be read as implied in 17c.

**17c** commences with מִכַּפְּרִים ("from the lions") which is an explicit reference to the suppliant's attackers. The metaphor of lions is often used for enemies and pictures the danger posed by the psalmist's enemies (Pss 7:2; 10:9; 17:12; 22:13, 21; 57:4; 74:4) (Stallman, 1997:515-516). The suppliant's enemies are explicitly referred to as lions because of their devastating behaviour toward him. They have attacked the suppliant in a similar manner lions attack their prey. The phrase מִכַּפְּרִים is followed by יְחִידָתִי ("my only [soul]"), which is the object of YHWH's deliverance and it refers to the suppliant's life. The suppliant wants God to deliver him from his attackers.

There is a synonymous parallelism, BASE-RESTATEMENT in 17b and 17c. My only [soul] (יְחִידָתִי) in 17c is a synonym of soul (נַפְשִׁי) in 17b. יְחִידָתִי ("my only [soul]") is another word for נַפְשִׁי ("soul") (see Goldingay, 2007a:498; Bratcher & Reyburn, 1991:336). The word (יְחִידָתִי) also emphasizes the dearness of life since one has only one life (see Kirkpatrick, 1910:181; Wilson, 2002:583). The idea of rescuing the psalmist's life in 17b is repeated in 17c, and this restatement highlights that the suppliant's life was at stake.

In the **bicolonic verse (verse 18)**, **18a** commences with אֹדֹתָי ("I will give you thanks"), the subject of אֹדֹתָי is the suppliant. The suppliant's thanksgiving is directed to YHWH. The verb אֹדֹתָי is followed by בְּקִהְלֵךְ רַב ("in the great congregation"). The phrase בְּקִהְלֵךְ רַב may refer to the community gathered for worship (Carpenter, 1997c:889), probably in the temple (Wilson, 2002:583-584). Mowinckel (1962b:87) and Goldingay (2007:498) suggest that בְּקִהְלֵךְ רַב was probably the cultic assembly in the temple during a pilgrimage festival. Kirkpatrick (1910:181) argues that the point here is that the psalmist will publicly publish his thanks among many people. Therefore, in 18a, the suppliant vows to give thanks to God publicly in the great congregation.

**18b** begins with **בְּעַם עֲצוּם** (“in the mighty crowd”) and is followed by the verb **אֶהְלֵלְךָ** (“I will praise you”). The idea of 18a is repeated in 18b. Therefore, there is a synonymous parallelism, BASE-RESTATEMENT in 18a and 18b. **אֶתְּנֶה לְךָ** (“I will give you thanks”) in 18a is synonymous to **אֶהְלֵלְךָ** (“I will praise you”) in 18b. **בְּקִהְל רַב** (“in the great congregation”) in 18a is synonymous to **בְּעַם עֲצוּם** (“in the mighty crowd”) in 18b. Therefore, the suppliant vows to give thanks and praise to YHWH when he delivers him from his attackers. There is also an extended parallelism<sup>12</sup> with a chiasmic pattern (a b b' a') in this verse 18a and 18b.

|           |                                    |
|-----------|------------------------------------|
| <b>a</b>  | I will give you thanks             |
|           | <b>B</b> in the great congregation |
|           | <b>b'</b> in the mighty crowd      |
| <b>a'</b> | I will praise you                  |

The purpose of the extended parallelism is to highlight or emphasize the point that the suppliant will thank and praise YHWH publicly in the temple, in the community gathered for worship. There is also inversion of roles: the suppliant's affliction by the enemies was enacted before others (e.g. the suppliant was accused in court –see verses 11-12; 15-16; 21). Now here in verses 17-18, the suppliant's thanksgiving and praise is to be enacted in the gathering of God's people when God rescues him from his enemies' attack.

To sum up Strophe G (verses 17-18), the suppliant makes a personal call to God to intervene. He wants God to rescue him from the life-threatening attacks of his enemies. He also vows to give thanks and praise to YHWH publicly among many people, most likely in the temple.

### 2.5.3 Stanza III (verses 19-28): A Prayer for Victory

In Stanza III (verses 19-28), the image of a military threat and lawsuit come together, which implies that the two parts could have been parts of a single complex plot against the psalmist. The word **שָׂמַח** (“gloat/rejoice”) appears three times (verses 19, 24, and 26).

<sup>12</sup> This refers to patterns of parallelism that extend further than just two lines (or a bicolon) (see Zogbo & Wendland, 2000:28-29; Wendland, 1998:117)

### **2.5.3.1 Strophe H (verses 19-21)**

Strophe *H* (verses 19-21) consists of an imprecation and the justification for the imprecation directed at the suppliant's enemies. This strophe consists of four bicola (verses 19ab, 19cd, 20 and 21).

The **first bicolon (verse 19ab)** is a negative wish: אַל-יִשְׂמְחוּ-לִי אֹיְבֵי שִׁקְרָא ("do not let those who are wrongfully my enemies rejoice over me"). The negative wish is directed to God. **19a** consists of the vetitive אַל-יִשְׂמְחוּ which has a jussive function ("do not let them rejoice"). The vetitive is attached to לִי ("over me") which refers to the suppliant. The suppliant prays that God will prevent his enemies from gloating over his distress (Grisanti, 1997b:1253).

**19b** commences with the participle אֹיְבֵי ("my enemies") which refers to the subject of 19a ("them", as is attested in the verb יִשְׂמְחוּ). The participle אֹיְבֵי is followed by the noun שִׁקְרָא which means "wrongfully" (Brown *et al*, 1979:1055). The noun שִׁקְרָא functions as an adverb. The noun שִׁקְרָא describes the actions and rejoicings of the suppliant's enemies that are fraudulent and unfounded (Carpenter & Grisanti, 1997c:248). To summarize 19ab, the suppliant does not want his enemies to rejoice over him.

In the **second bicolon (verse 19cd)**, **19c** begins with the participle שֹׂנְאֵי ("those who hate me") which also refers to the suppliant's enemies. The participle שֹׂנְאֵי is followed by the adverb חֲנָם ("without cause") which shows that the enemies hated the suppliant for no reason. The idea in 19a is repeated in 19d. The vetitive, indicated by אַל in 19a also applies to 19d: The suppliant does not want "those who hate him without cause, [to] wink the eye" (שֹׂנְאֵי חֲנָם יִקְרְצוּ-עֵינָי).

**19d** commences with the verb יִקְרְצוּ ("they wink") which has a jussive function. The verb יִקְרְצוּ is attached to עֵינָי ("the eye").

There is a synonymous parallelism, BASE-RESTATEMENT in 19a and 19d. The expression יִשְׂמְחוּ-לִי ("rejoice over me") in 19a, means to be happy and the expression יִקְרְצוּ-עֵינָי ("wink the eye") in 19d may mean to gloat gleefully (Bratcher & Reyburn, 1991:337).

The meaning of the expression יִקְרְצוּ-עֵינָי ("wink the eye") in 19d is problematic, hence various suggestions have been given by scholars:

- The expression means to "act and to speak duplicitously, making insinuations that impact others negatively (cf. Prov 6:13; 10:10)" (see Wilson, 2002:584).
- The expression is a gesture with some power, rather than a curse (cf. Prov 6:13; 10:10) (see Goldingay, 2007a:499).

- The expression may mean to “wink maliciously” (Harman, 1997:994)
- The expression is an idiom which means “to gloat gleefully” or “to smirk with delight.” The TEV follows this interpretation (see Bratcher & Reyburn, 1991:337).

Eaton (2003:159) would also argue that “winking eyes and the evil gloating” may have a background of sorcery, but from the context of Psalm 35 and taking into consideration the parallelism of *ישמחו עלי* in 19a and *יקרצו עין* (“wink the eye”) in 19d, it appears as if the psalmist’s enemies were winking their eyes as a sign of congratulations at the ruin of the suppliant over whom they had completely triumphed (Kroll, 1987:104). The psalmist is asking God to spare him from this scornful gesture. The nature of this negative wish is not to do the enemies harm, but that their evil plans may be frustrated.

There is also an extended parallelism with a chiasmic pattern (a b b’ a’) in 19ab and 19cd (see Goldingay, 2007a:498).

|           |  |
|-----------|--|
| <b>a</b>  | Do not let them rejoice over me              |
| <b>b</b>  | Those who are wrongfully my enemies          |
| <b>b'</b> | Those who hate me without cause              |
| <b>a'</b> | [Do not let them] <sup>13</sup> Wink the eye |

The purpose of the extended parallelism is to highlight or emphasize the point that the psalmist does not want his enemies to glee or rejoice over his misfortunes. This plea is an indirect plea that God may sustain the suppliant so that the enemies would not have reason to rejoice.

In the **third bicolon (verse 20)**, 20a begins with a conjunction *כי* (“for”) which gives the justification or rationale for the preceding imprecation as well as subsequent imprecations directed at the enemies of the suppliant. The conjunction *כי* is followed by *לא*. The negative particle *לא* is followed by *שלום* (“peace”), which functions as the object of *ידברו* (“they speak”). The verb *ידברו* (“they speak”) is negated by the negative particle *לא*. The idea that the suppliant’s enemies did not seek peace with others in 20a is restated in 20b, resulting in a synonymous parallelism, BASE-RESTATEMENT between 20a and 20b.

**20b** is also syndetically linked to 20a by the conjunction *ו*. The phrase *על רגעי ארץ* (“against the quiet ones of the land”) functions as the indirect object of *יחשבו* (“they devise”).

<sup>13</sup> This phrase is not there in the Masoretic Text, but it is implied.

The expression **דְּבָרֵי מְרִמּוֹת** (“deceitful words”) functions as the direct object of **יַחְשְׁבוּן** (“they devise”). Like in 20a, the subject of 20b is the suppliant’s enemies. Therefore, the enemies devised the deceitful words “against the quiet ones of the land” (**עַל רְנֵיעֵי-אֶרֶץ**). The phrase “for they do not speak peace” (**כִּי לֹא שָׁלוֹם יְדַבְּרוּ**) in 20a can either mean that the suppliant’s enemies did not speak in a friendly way (the NEB follows this interpretation and translates 20a as “no friendly greeting do they give”) or they did not seek peace with others, which implies they were at war with everyone (see Bratcher & Reyburn, 1991:337). The expression **רְנֵיעֵי-אֶרֶץ** (“quiet ones of the land”) in 20b occurs only here in the Masoretic Text. The expression can mean:

- “harmless or peaceable” people (the NJB follows this interpretation and translates the expression as “the peace loving people of the land.”) or
- “people whose hearts sit quietly” therefore the expression is an idiom (Bratcher & Reyburn, 1991:338) or
- a congregation or the people of God, who want to live in peace with their neighbours and oppressors (Mowinckel, 1962b:87).

From the literary context of the psalm, the expression **רְנֵיעֵי-אֶרֶץ** seems to refer to the people of God, who wanted to live in peace with their neighbours and oppressors. The suppliant was part of God’s people, who gathered for worship (verse 18). Therefore in verse 20, the suppliant wants God to prevent his enemies from rejoicing over his misfortunes because their behaviour is hostile. They are not peaceful people and their speech towards God’s people, who want to live in peace, is characterised by lies or words of deceit (as implied by **דְּבָרֵי מְרִמּוֹת יַחְשְׁבוּן**).

In the **last bicolon (verse 21)**, **21a** commences with the *waw* consecutive verb **יִרְחִיבוּ** (“then they opened wide”) which describes the activities of the enemies after they have devised deceitful words against the quiet ones of the land in 20b. The subject of the *waw* consecutive verb **יִרְחִיבוּ** is the suppliant’s enemies. The verb **יִרְחִיבוּ** is followed by **עָלַי** (“against me”) which indicates that the suppliant is the victim of the enemies’ activity. The preposition is followed by **פִּיהֶם** (“their mouths”) which functions as the object of **יִרְחִיבוּ**.

**21b** begins with **אָמְרוּ** (“they said”) which refers to the activity of the suppliant’s enemies. The verb **אָמְרוּ** is followed by the exact words that came from the enemies’ mouths **הֵאָחַח הָאָחַח רָאָתָה עֵינֵינוּ** (“Aha! Aha! Our eyes have seen it”). Therefore, there is a synthetic

parallelism completive correlation, BASE-CONTENT in 21a and 21b. Verse 21b gives the content of verse 21a. In 21a the psalmist's enemies open wide their mouths and 22b gives the words that came from their mouths. The expression וַיִּרְחִיבוּ עָלַי פִּיהֶם ("and they opened wide their mouths against me") may mean shouting (the TEV follows this interpretation, translating 21a as "they accuse me, shouting") or it may be a gesture of mockery and contempt as in Isaiah 57:4. Dahood (1966:215) argues that the expression depicts a ravenous monster, threatening to devour. The former interpretation that the expression is a gesture of mockery and contempt seems more plausible in light of the context. Their words "Aha! Aha!" (הָאָחַ הָאָחַ) in verses 21b and 25 (cf. Ezek 25:3; 26:2; 36:2) are an expression of satisfaction over the misfortune of the suppliant (Brown *et al*, 1979:210). This was a public form of finger pointing which was intended to cause public shame and disgrace on an individual. The enemies of the suppliant are also said to "gape." This was a visible physical distortion of their mouths in a public display of pretended astonishment that was intended to ridicule the psalmist (Wilson, 2002:584). The phrase רָאִתָּה עֵינֵינוּ ("our eyes have seen it") in verse 21b implies that the suppliant's enemies tried to justify their deeds by means of false witness and they were very verbose. This verse confirms 15c "they would not be silent." In the face of these people who were roaring like lions, the impression is that the suppliant keeps the "silence of the lambs." However, he appeals to YHWH, whom he also calls "My Lord" (אֲדֹנָי). He expresses his fear and indignation before YHWH.

In short, the suppliant in Strophe *H* (verses 19-21) asks God to prevent his enemies from rejoicing over his misfortunes. He does not want his enemies to scornfully wink their eyes and to gloat gleefully at him. He wants God to spare him the scornful gesture of his enemies. The suppliant gives the reason why God should prevent his enemies from rejoicing over his misfortunes. The reason is that his enemies are hostile. They are not peaceful people but are at war with God's people. They are deceitful. They have publicly mocked the suppliant and accused him of crimes he did not commit.

### **2.5.3.2 Strophe I (verses 22-24a)**

Strophe *I* (verses 22-24a) consists of a tricolon (verse 22), a bicolon (verse 23) and a single colon (verse 24a). In Strophe *I*, the suppliant makes a petition. He appeals to YHWH for protection against his enemies. This strophe seems to be the psalm's most extensive plea

because of the presence of the six invocations. The imagery is that of a court case (see verses 11-18). Gerstenberger (1988:152) argues that these invocations certainly represent a new liturgical section. The six invocations involve three nouns in the three possible pairings: *יְהוָה/אֲדֹנָי* (“YHWH/my Lord”) in verse 22, then *אֱלֹהֵי/אֲדֹנָי* (“My God/my Lord”) in verse 23, then *יְהוָה/אֱלֹהֵי* (“YHWH/my God”) in verse 24 (see Goldingay, 2007a:499-500). Apart from the six-fold invocations, the suppliant’s petition is also highlighted by diverse jussives (*אַל-תִּחַרֶשׁ* in 22a; *אַל-תִּרְחַק* in 22b) and imperatives (*הַעֲרֵה* and *הַקִּיֵּץ* in 23a; *שִׁפְטֵנִי* in 24a) (Gerstenberger, 1988:152).

In the **tricolitic verse (verse 22)**, **22a** consists of *רָאִיתָהּ* (“you have seen it”) which is directed to YHWH.

**22b** begins with *יְהוָה* which functions as the subject of the colon and is followed by the vetitive *אַל-תִּחַרֶשׁ* (“do not be silent”) which is also an adverbial phrase. The phrase *אַל-תִּחַרֶשׁ* is a metaphor for inaction (see Oswalt, 1997b:297). The suppliant wants God to act on his behalf. There is a subtle wordplay between *רָאִיתָהּ עֵינֵינוּ* (“our eyes have seen it”) in 21b and *רָאִיתָהּ יְהוָה* (“YHWH has seen it”) in 22a. The enemies have falsely accused the suppliant and claim to be firsthand witnesses of his disgrace when they say “our eyes have seen it” (*רָאִיתָהּ עֵינֵינוּ*) in 21b. Now the suppliant appeals to the superior vision of YHWH: “You [YHWH] have seen it” because YHWH is the reliable eye-witness, he sees and knows the truth.

The vetitive *אַל-תִּחַרֶשׁ* is directed to YHWH. The enemies speak a lot. YHWH must answer them. Probably the suppliant has in mind an answer not necessarily by words, but rather by deeds. In the light of the preceding verses (verses 11-21), YHWH may answer by confounding their false testimony. At this juncture, the suppliant pictures YHWH as the all seeing witness and judge (Wilson, 2002:584; Anderson, 1972a:284).

**22c** commences with the invocation *אֲדֹנָי* (“my Lord”). The invocation *אֲדֹנָי* is followed by the vetitive *אַל-תִּרְחַק מִמֶּנִּי* (“do not be far away from me”) which is directed to YHWH. The expression *אַל-תִּרְחַק מִמֶּנִּי* suggests that the suppliant has sensed alienation either from deliverance or from his deliverer, YHWH (O’Connell, 1997b:1101). The suppliant feels that YHWH has forsaken him – he is far away from him. When YHWH draws near, that means action. Therefore, the suppliant asks YHWH to intervene, to help him in his time of need.

As far as coherence or semantic relations are concerned, there is a synonymous parallelism, BASE-RESTATEMENT in 22b and 22c. In both cola (verse 22b and 22c), the suppliant

wants YHWH to listen to his plea and come to his aid. The expression **יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי תַחֲרֹשׁ** (22b) is parallel to **אֱלֹהֵי תַחֲרֹק מִמֶּנִּי** (22c).

In the second **bicolonic verse (verse 23)**, **23a** begins with the two imperatives **הָעִירָה וְהִקְיִצה** (“awake and arise”) which emphasize the urgency of the psalmist’s call for deliverance and the acuteness of the psalmist’s situation (Basson, 2005:18). Both verbs **עוֹר** and **קִיֵּץ** are used of someone awaking or rousing himself from sleep. The two imperatives **הָעִירָה** and **הִקְיִצה** are thus synonymous expressions meaning “awaken” (hendiadys). The verb **קִיֵּץ** (“awake”) in this context is not connected to Canaanite fertility rites where the vegetation deity was awakened in the spring. When the suppliant uses the verb **קִיֵּץ**, he is calling upon God to act and he does this by using the figure of awakening him from sleep (Bratcher & Reyburn, 1991:338). The sleep metaphor “refers to a perceived sense of inexplicable divine inactivity” (Hamilton, 1997c:360). The use of **הָעִירָה** and **הִקְיִצה** does not suggest divine slumber. Rather they express the suppliant’s desire for YHWH to stir himself up from apparent inactivity to actively accomplish his deliverance (Wilson, 2002:584; Miller, 1998:216-217; Kroll, 1987:104). The two imperatives are followed by **לְמִשְׁפָּטִי** which may be translated as “to my defence” because YHWH establishes his justice through deliverance or vindication (Schultz, 1997:217). The phrase **לְמִשְׁפָּטִי** implies that YHWH is a righteous judge who sees to it that justice is accorded to the suppliant and that his cause is successfully defended in court.

**23b** begins with a pair of invocations **אֱלֹהֵי וְאֲדֹנָי** (“my God and my Lord”) which are put next to each other so that they mitigate against any disrespect of YHWH implied by the imperatives: **הָעִירָה** and **הִקְיִצה** (Goldingay, 2007a:500). The pair of invocations (**אֱלֹהֵי וְאֲדֹנָי**) shows the earnestness of the suppliant’s plea in 23a. The pair of invocations (**אֱלֹהֵי וְאֲדֹנָי**) is followed by **לְרִיבִי** (“to contend for me”) which shows that the suppliant is the object of God’s defence.

In verse 23, YHWH is called to intervene and execute justice on behalf of the suppliant.

The **last single colon (verse 24a)** commences with the imperative **שְׁפַטֵּנִי** (“defend me”), which is directed to the vocative **יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי** (“YHWH my God”). The imperative is followed by **כְּצִדְקָךָ** (“in your righteousness”) which shows that YHWH is the reliable judge or an arbiter. He is able to vindicate the suppliant. The phrase **כְּצִדְקָךָ** is followed by the pair of invocations **יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי** (“YHWH my God”) which are the subject of the imperative **שְׁפַטֵּנִי**. The pair of invocations **יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי** show the suppliant’s earnestness for God to contend for him. Therefore, in 24a, the suppliant asks YHWH to judge him according to divine righteousness - to declare

him innocent of all charges. YHWH establishes judgment through deliverance and vindication of the righteous and punishment of the wicked (Schultz, 1997:217).

In a nutshell, the suppliant in Strophe *I* (verses 22-24a) urgently appeals to YHWH, the all-seeing witness and judge, to intervene in his situation. He wants YHWH to draw near to him and help him in his time of need. The suppliant wants YHWH to execute justice according to his divine righteousness by defending him and declaring him innocent of all charges. This strophe teaches the readers/listeners not to lose hope when they are falsely accused and unjustly persecuted by their enemies, but instead to appeal to YHWH, the all-seeing witness and judge, to intervene in their situation. This strophe implies to the readers/listeners that YHWH is a righteous judge, who defends his people and declares them innocent. YHWH is seen to execute justice by delivering and vindicating the righteous and by punishing the wicked.

### **2.5.3.3 Strophe J (verses 24b-26d)**

Strophe *J* (verses 24b-26d) consists of a tricolon (verses 24b-25b) and two bicola (verse 26). The strophe is a series of imprecations where the suppliant asks YHWH to prevent his enemies from rejoicing over him. He prays for his enemies to be ashamed and humiliated.

The **tricolon (verses 24b-25b)** is syndetically linked to Strophe *I* (verses 22a-24a) by the conjunction ו. Verse 24b is a reiteration of the suppliant's wish in 19a. **24b** is a negative wish: אֶל-יִשְׂמְחוּ-לִי ("do not let them rejoice over me"). The negative wish is directed to YHWH. The negative wish consists of the vetitive אֶל-יִשְׂמְחוּ which has a jussive function ("do not let them rejoice"). The subject of the vetitive is the suppliant's enemies. The prepositional object לִי attached to the vetitive אֶל-יִשְׂמְחוּ shows that the suppliant is the object of אֶל-יִשְׂמְחוּ. Therefore, in 24b, the suppliant does not want his enemies to rejoice over him.

Like 24b, **25a** is a negative wish: אֶל-יֹאמְרוּ בְּלִבָּם הֵאָח נִפְשָׁנוּ ("do not let them say in their heart, 'Aha, our desire'"). This negative wish is directed to YHWH. The subject of 25a is the suppliant's enemies. The negative wish consists of the vetitive אֶל-יֹאמְרוּ which functions as a jussive ("do not let them say"). The vetitive אֶל-יֹאמְרוּ is followed by בְּלִבָּם ("in their heart") which refers to the hearts of the suppliant's enemies. This is a Hebrew way of saying "think" (the NJB and NIV translate אֶל-יֹאמְרוּ אֶל-יֹאמְרוּ as "do not let them think"). The phrase בְּלִבָּם is followed by the exact words that the suppliant does not want his enemies to utter הֵאָח נִפְשָׁנוּ ("aha, our desire"). The enemies' expression הֵאָח נִפְשָׁנוּ ("aha, our desire") is a way of saying

that they have achieved what they wanted. Some translations follow this interpretation: the NIV translates *הָאָח נִפְשָׁנוּ* as “Aha, just what we wanted!”, the NJB “Just as we hoped”, the NKJV “Ah, so would we have it” and the TEV “we are rid of him.” The suppliant wants YHWH to prevent his enemies from rejoicing over his misfortunes (Bratcher & Reyburn, 1991:338).

Like 24b and 25a, **25b** is a negative wish: *אַל־יֹאמְרוּ בְלַעַנְוֹהוּ* (“do not let them say, ‘we have swallowed him up!’”) which is directed to YHWH. The subject of 25b is the suppliant’s enemies. The suppliant is the victim/object of his enemies’ activity. The negative wish consists of the vetitive *אַל־יֹאמְרוּ* which has a jussive function (“do not let them say”). The vetitive (*אַל־יֹאמְרוּ*) is followed by the exact words which the suppliant does not want his enemies to utter *בְלַעַנְוֹהוּ* (“we have swallowed him up!”). The expression *יֹאמְרוּ בְלַעַנְוֹהוּ* (“we have swallowed him up”) in verse 25b is another way of saying that they have ruined him completely (cf. Ps 124:3; Prov 1:12; Jer 30:16; Lam 2:16). The suppliant asks YHWH to prevent his enemies from getting to a point that they rejoice over him and claim they have ruined him completely (Anderson, 1972a:285).

As far as coherence or semantic relations are concerned, there is a synonymous parallelism, GENERAL-SPECIFIC relation in 24b and 25ab. Verse 24b is a general wish: “do not let them rejoice over me” (*אַל־יִשְׂמְחוּ־לִי*) and verse 25ab is more specific as to what YHWH should not allow the suppliant’s enemies to say as they rejoice over him: “do not let them say in their heart, ‘Aha, our desire’” (*אַל־יֹאמְרוּ בְלִבָּם הָאָח נִפְשָׁנוּ*) and “do not let them say, ‘we have swallowed him up!’” (*אַל־יֹאמְרוּ בְלַעַנְוֹהוּ*).

In the **first bicolon (verse 26ab)**, **26a** consists of a predicate, which functions like a jussive (*וַיִּבְשׂוּ וַיִּחְפְּרוּ יַחְדָּר* - “let them be ashamed and humiliated altogether”). YHWH is the one who is to shame and humiliate the suppliant’s enemies. The negative wish contains a pair of verbs of similar meaning (hendiadys): – *חִפְּרוּ/יִבְשׂוּ* (“ashamed/ humiliated”).

**26b** consists of the adjectival phrase *שִׂמְחֵי רַעֲתִי* (“those who rejoice in my misfortune”) which identifies the suppliant’s enemies as those who rejoice in the suppliant’s misfortune. The noun *רַעֲתִי* which appears in 26b and is translated as “my misfortune” also appears in 4d and refers to the “evil” that the psalmist’s enemies have devised against him. Therefore, the suppliant’s misfortune which his enemies have rejoiced over was planned or devised by his enemies.

In the **second bicolon (verse 26cd)**, **26c** consists of the predicate which functions like a jussive (יִלְבְּשׁוּ-בִשְׂתַּת וּכְלֵמָה) -“let them be clothed with shame and disgrace”). This negative wish is directed to YHWH who is to clothe the suppliant’s enemies with shame and disgrace. The negative wish contains a pair of nouns with a similar meaning (hendiadys)– כְּלֵמָה / בִּשְׂתַּת (“shame/ disgrace”). Usually, the wearing of clothes gives honour and covers shame. Here in verse 26c, clothes are a simile of shame. We have the inversion: the clothes that supposedly give honour are now to give shame and disgrace.

**26d** consists of a participial phrase identifying the subject, הַמְגַדִּילִים עָלַי (‘they who magnified themselves over me). The enemies have magnified themselves over the psalmist – they are proud and arrogant and claim to be better than the psalmist (see Bratcher & Reyburn, 1991:340).

Therefore, in verse 26cd, the suppliant wants his enemies, who have been rejoicing in his misfortune, to experience the total humiliating defeat they had planned for him.

As far as coherence or semantic relations are concerned, there is a synonymous parallelism, BASE-RESTATEMENT in verses 26ab and 26cd. The idea that the enemies should be humiliated in 26ab is repeated or restated in 26cd. In both cases the enemies are also identified (26b & 26d).

There is also a parallelism between the tricolon (24b-25b) and the two bicola (26). The first is a negative wish (generic statement with two specific statements). The last conveys basically the same, but these two are positive statements which specifically identify the enemies.

In summary, the suppliant in Strophe *J* (verses 24b-26) asks God to prevent his enemies from rejoicing over him and claiming to have ruined him completely. He prays for his enemies to be ashamed and humiliated. He wants his enemies to experience the total humiliating defeat that they had planned for him. This defeat will be a reversal: humiliation to vindication for the suppliant; nasty pride to humiliation for the enemies.

#### **2.5.3.4 Strophe K (verses 27-28)**

In Strophe *K* (verses 27-28), the suppliant calls his friends, who want to see him declared innocent, to praise YHWH for his greatness and he vows to proclaim praises to YHWH all day

long. This is in direct contrast to the end of the preceding strophe: The enemies are identified twice (26b, 26d), but they are to be humbled. The friends are identified once, but they rejoice with the suppliant. This strophe concludes the third stanza (verses 19-28) and the whole psalm. This strophe consists of three bicola (verses 27ab, 27cd and 28).

In the **first bicolon (verse 27ab)**, **27a** commences with the predicate, which functions like a jussive (יִרְנוּ וַיִּשְׂמְחוּ) – “let them shout for joy and rejoice”). This predicate is a positive wish expressed to the suppliant’s friends. This positive wish is directed to YHWH. YHWH is the one who is to allow the suppliant’s friends to shout for joy and rejoice in his deliverance. The positive wish contains a pair of verbs of similar meaning (hendiadys): – יִשְׂמְחוּ / יִרְנוּ (“shout for joy/ rejoice”).

**27b** consists of the adjectival phrase תְּפִצֵי צְדָקָי (“those who delight in my righteousness”).

The **second bicolon (verse 27cd)** describes the manner in which the suppliant’s friends will shout for joy and rejoice with the suppliant (27a) or the consequence of YHWH letting them rejoice: So that they will say continually, “YHWH is great, he who delights in his servant’s peace” (27cd). **27c** commences with וַיֹּאמְרוּ תָמִיד (“and they shall say continually”) which is followed in **27d** by the exact words of joy the friends of the suppliant will proclaim יִגְדַל יְהוָה הַחֹפֵץ שְׁלוֹם עַבְדּוֹ (“YHWH is great, he who delights in his servant’s peace”).

Therefore, in verse 27, the suppliant calls his friends to shout for joy and rejoice in his vindication and proclaim that “YHWH is great” (יִגְדַל יְהוָה). Unlike the suppliant’s enemies who “magnified themselves” (הִמְגִדִּילִים) (verse 26d), the friends of the suppliant will magnify YHWH because of his greatness (verse 27cd). Whereas the suppliant’s enemies’ greatness was seen in their malicious harassment, YHWH’s greatness is seen in his pleasure to set things right for the suffering and vulnerable, thus acting for the sake of this servant’s peace (verses 1-3, 10, 23-24, 27) (McCann, 1996: 820; Goldingay, 2007a:502). YHWH’s attribute of delighting in his servant’s peace is in contrast to the suppliant’s enemies’ moral attribute of being hostile to God’s people, for they did not “speak peace” to God’s people (verse 20).

The **final bicolon** (verse 28) is a vow or resolve to proclaim righteousness and praise of the Lord (verse 28). This vow or resolve concludes the third stanza (verses 19-28) and the whole psalm. The psalmist vows to proclaim YHWH’s righteousness and praise all day long (וּלְשׁוֹנִי תְהַלֵּלָהּ צְדָקָה כָּל-הַיּוֹם תְּהַלְלֶתָהּ). **28a** is syndetically linked to verse 27 by the conjunction

ו. The conjunction is attached to לְשׁוֹנִי (“my tongue”) which functions as the subject of the colon. The fact that the conjunction וְ is attached to the subject לְשׁוֹנִי (not the verb) and that the subject לְשׁוֹנִי has been placed before the verb תְּהַלֵּל indicates that the subject (לְשׁוֹנִי) is emphasized. לְשׁוֹנִי refers to the suppliant’s tongue. This is followed by תְּהַלֵּל (“it will proclaim”) which refers to the proclamation of the suppliant’s tongue. The verb תְּהַלֵּל is followed by צְדִקָּךָ (“your righteousness”) which refers to YHWH’s righteousness. YHWH’s righteousness is a key topic of YHWH’s praise and also of the whole psalm. Although we had some battle imagery, this psalm is mostly set in the sphere of a court case. The fact that the Judge vindicates the person who has been falsely accused, gives evidence of his righteousness.

**28b** consists of כָּל-הַיּוֹם תְּהַלֵּלְךָ (“all day long your praise”) which functions as the object of תְּהַלֵּל. This implies that the phrase וּלְשׁוֹנִי תְּהַלֵּל (“my tongue will proclaim”) in 28a also applies to 28b. The phrases צְדִקָּךָ (“your righteousness”) and תְּהַלֵּלְךָ (“your praise”) are parallel and they correspond to each other. 28ab seems to echo 27ab, thus in 28ab the suppliant is saying: just as his friends will rejoice in his righteousness, so in the same way, with his own tongue, he will proclaim YHWH’s righteousness and praise, which correspond to the content of his friends’ praises in 27ab. Therefore, in verse 28, the suppliant will proclaim YHWH’s righteousness and his praise.

There is also an inversion of roles: the suppliant was mocked publicly by his enemies, thus bringing about his shame and disgrace (verse 20-21). In verses 26-28, the suppliant’s enemies are to be ashamed and humiliated while the suppliant, who had been humiliated, is confident that YHWH will set things right, thus acting for the sake of this servant’s peace. As a result he will proclaim YHWH’s righteousness and praise all day long.

To sum up Strophe *K* (verses 27-28), the suppliant calls his friends, who want to see him declared innocent, to praise YHWH for his greatness because he loves to set things right by providing peace for his servants, who are suffering and are in a vulnerable situation. YHWH sets them free from their oppressors. The implication of this strophe to the readers/listeners is that YHWH should be praised because he delights/loves to provide justice to his servants, and therefore the suffering and vulnerable should not despair when they go through unjust suffering and persecution by their enemies. The suppliant concludes the psalm with a promise to proclaim YHWH’s righteousness and praise all day long. This strophe implies that the reader/listener should continuously proclaim YHWH’s righteousness.

#### **2.5.4 Summary of intra-textual analysis**

Psalm 35 commences with an urgent call for YHWH to intervene in the psalmist's time of great need (verse 1). The psalmist wants YHWH to be his advocate and warrior. He appeals to YHWH to use both defensive and offensive weapons against his pursuers (verse 2-3). He anticipates the victory that would come when YHWH comes to his rescue (verse 3). He is confident that when YHWH fights, his enemies experience shame, dishonour, humiliation, dispersion, retreat and sudden destruction by their own devices (verses 4-8). The suppliant vows to continuously rejoice and praise YHWH in response to the anticipated deliverance by YHWH (verse 10). He describes his distress when violent witnesses stood up and falsely testified against him in an outrageous way with the purpose of harming and discrediting the suppliant (verse 11). The suppliant is innocent and has no clue as to the false allegations made by his enemies (verse 11). He has done good deeds to his enemies but they have returned evil for good and this causes the suppliant's heart to experience deep emotional pain (verses 12-13). When his enemies were sick, the suppliant grieved over their illness as much as he would have grieved over the death of his nearest kin (verses 13-14). He expressed his deep grief by wearing sackcloth, fasting and praying for his enemies' healing, but when he stumbled, the attackers did not do the same for him. They surrounded him and continually tore him apart with unwarranted, slanderous accusations (verse 15). They expressed their anger and hatred ruthlessly toward him (verses 15c-16). In response to the enemies' persecution, the suppliant makes a personal call to God to intervene (verse 17). He wants God to rescue him from the life-threatening attacks of his enemies (verse 17). He also vows to give thanks and praise to YHWH publicly among many people (verse 18). The suppliant then asks God to prevent his enemies from rejoicing over his misfortunes because his enemies have been hostile and deceitful people (verses 19-21; 25). The suppliant makes a renewed petition to YHWH to save him from his enemies (verses 22-23). He wants YHWH to execute justice by defending and declaring him innocent of all charges according to his divine righteousness (verse 24). The psalmist prays that his enemies who have been rejoicing in his misfortune would experience the shame and humiliation that they had planned for him (inversion of roles) (verse 26). The psalm ends with the suppliant's call to his friends, who want to see him declared innocent, to praise YHWH for his greatness because he loves to set things right by providing peace for his servants, who are suffering and are in a vulnerable situation. YHWH sets them free from their oppressors (verses 27-28).

## **2.6 Literary Genre, Historical and Life Setting of Psalm 35**

### **2.6.1 Main views about the genre of Psalm 35**

Psalm 35 has been traditionally classified as an individual lament or complaint (Gunkel & Begrich, 1998:121; McCann, 1996: 818; Williams, 1986:263; Anderson, 1972a:275) since the usual characteristics of a lament are present, such as a petition for deliverance (1-3, 17, 22-25), a petition for judgment upon enemies (4-6, 8, 19, 26) complaint (7, 11-12, 15-16, 20-21), a confession of innocence (13-14) and a vow to praise (9-10, 18, 28).

Craigie (1983:282-286) and Eaton (2003:158) classify Psalm 35 as a “royal prayer for international crisis,” since the psalm is a prayer of a king who is faced with international enemies. In his prayer the king asks God for help and deliverance from his enemies. Craigie and Eaton base their argument of the presence of military language in the psalm.

Contrary to Eaton and Craigie, Davidson (1998:118-119) views Psalm 35 as an individual lament and argues that the dominant language in the psalm is that of the “law of court.” He views the whole psalm as a trial in which the psalmist’s plea is for a verdict of not guilty with respect to the charges brought against him.

### **2.6.2 An investigation of the genre of Psalm 35**

Eaton (2003:158) and Craigie (1983:282-286) seem to reach their conclusion that the psalm is not a lament but “a royal prayer for international crisis” because they focus primarily on the battle imagery in the psalm. As seen from the intra-textual analysis of the psalm, both the battle and the courtroom images are developed throughout the psalm. Therefore, when reading the psalm, both metaphors are present, but after verse 11 (for the greater part of the psalm) the courtroom imagery predominates. Craigie and Eaton overemphasize the battle imagery over against the courtroom imagery and they conclude that the psalm is a royal prayer for an international crisis. On the other hand, Davidson overemphasizes the courtroom imagery and concludes that the whole psalm is a trial.

On the basis of its structure and content, Psalm 35 can be classified as an individual lament. The usual characteristics of a lament<sup>14</sup> are present in the psalm.

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<sup>14</sup> “The lament is the psalmist’s cry when in great distress. He has nowhere to turn but to God” (Longman, 1988:26). The seven elements which are associated with a lament, though not strictly in order are: 1. Invocation 2. Plea to

### **2.6.3 Life Setting of Psalm 35**

Craigie (1983:286) argues that though the evidence is not firm, Psalm 35 could have been utilized within the temple, perhaps in a liturgical setting, either as a consequence of grave military threat or else prior to the king's departure for battle to meet his adversary. He says that if the latter is the case, then there are parallels between Psalm 35 and Psalm 20. Craigie argues that the congregational setting of the ritual is supported by the reference to the "great congregation" (verse 18), to the "quiet ones" (verse 20) - which he interprets as a description of a pious congregation - and the call to praise in verse 27, which he interprets as a congregational response to praise. Craigie's view is largely determined by his view on the genre of this Psalm (see 2.5.1).

Gerstenberger (1988:193) views the original setting of Psalm 35 as a "private cultic" ritual and the psalm would have been used by a suffering individual "as a central part of the recitations that were obligatory for the sufferer who underwent such rehabilitating ritual in the circle of friends and family."

Mays (1994:154) says Psalm 35 was "composed for the typical situation in which a person needed vindication because of the damaging hostility of others." He sees the psalm as a formal version of David's impromptu prayer designed for ritual at a shrine.

As seen from the above, there are different proposals with regards to the life setting of the psalm. Most scholars agree that the psalm was probably used in the temple, but they have different views on the cultic setting of the psalm. The language and imagery of Psalm 35 are open-ended enough to apply to a variety of circumstances. Therefore, Psalm 35 was probably a resource for sufferers throughout generations. The psalm served as a prayer for help and a testimony to God's character. God is seen as the one who helps, delivers, and provides for the weak, the needy and the vulnerable (See McCann, 1996:819).

### **2.6.4 Authorship and historical situation of Psalm 35**

Keeping in mind the intra-textual analysis, it is important to discuss the possible author and historical situation of the psalm.

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God for help 3. Complaints 4. Confession of sin or an assertion of innocence 5. Curse of enemies (imprecation) 6. Confidence in God's response 7. Hymn or blessing (Longman, 1988:27). Wendland (1998:33-34) also observes that in these psalms, the psalmists describe their distress or danger that they are facing and they also make a personal vow that they will always thank God for having saved them or they will bring sacrifices of thanksgiving to the temple.

The title of Psalm 35 is “Of David” (לְדָוִד). This may be translated to mean “about David” or “for David”, indicating that the psalm concerns or is dedicated to him. This title could also be an editorial comment that indicates that the psalm belongs to the collection of David and is part of the first group of psalms (3-41).

Some exegetes (e.g. Leupold, 1959:284; Goldingay, 2007a:490; Gaebelein, 1939:156) argue that there are many points of correspondence between the statements of Psalm 35 and the experiences of David in Saul’s day. This may be suggested if one compares I Samuel 20, 23, 24, 25 and 26. These correspondences and the superscription “Of David” do not conclusively prove Davidic authorship but may introduce the possibility that David may have had a hand in the writing of Psalm 35.

The intra-textual analysis of Psalm 35 suggested that the suppliant could have faced a military threat that encompassed a lawsuit and this seems to support the tradition of Davidic authorship. David faced a military threat from King Saul and his army (1 Sam 20, 23, 24, 24 and 26). David had an intimate relationship with Saul and his son, Jonathan (cf. 1 Sam 16:21-23; 18:1-5). Saul also referred to David as his son (1 Sam 24:16; 26:21). David even referred to Saul as his father (1 Sam 24:11). The psalmist’s enemies wanted to kill the psalmist (Ps 35:4 & 17). Saul wanted to take David’s life (1 Sam 18:10-11, 25; 19:1; 20:30-31). The psalmist’s enemies pursued his path (verses 4-6). Saul and his army pursued David (1 Sam 23:8; 24:2). The psalmist was innocent and did not wrong his enemies (verses 7, 19). David was innocent and did not wrong Saul in any way (1 Sam 19:4-5; 21:32; 24:11; 26:18). The psalmist wants YHWH to be his advocate and judge (Ps 35:1a, 23, 24a). David appeals to God to judge between himself and Saul (1 Sam 24:12, 15). The psalmist uses legal, judicial, military, and hunting metaphors in Psalm 35. David could have been familiar with the judicial metaphor because he lived at King Saul’s palace (1 Sam 18). He was also a warrior in charge of Saul’s army (1 Sam 18:5ff) so this could also explain the use of military metaphors. David was a shepherd (1 Sam 16:11; 17:14, 20, 34-37), and most shepherds knew how to hunt for animals and birds. This could explain the use the hunting metaphors in Psalm 35. Finally, the psalmist does not have a vindictive spirit, which is implied by his desire not to rejoice in his enemies’ downfall but in YHWH’s deliverance (Ps 35:9). Twice David had the opportunity to kill Saul but each time he spared his life (1 Sam 24, 26).

These similarities suggest the possibility that Psalm 35 could have been written by David when he was being attacked and pursued by Saul. It at least reflects aspects of David's life and experience.

## **2.7 Canonical Context of Psalm 35**

Psalm 35 has לְדָוִד (‘‘of David’’) as its superscription. . This superscription indicates the existence of a collection (McCann, 1996:657) within which Psalm 35 had been placed and belonged (Durham, 1971:158; Broyles, 1999:27-28). The superscription לְדָוִד means that Psalm 35 belongs to the collection associated with David, designated Book I (Psalms 1-41 or 3-41), since this book of the Psalter, in which Psalm 35 is placed, mentions David in the superscription of nearly every psalm. There is another Davidic collection, Book II of the Psalter, formed by Psalms 41-72 (McCann, 1996:657). The present discussion only investigates the significance of the placement of Psalm 35 in Book I.

With regards to the structure of Book I of the Psalter, Psalms 1 and 2 (which do not mention David in the superscription) serve as the introduction or prologue to (at least) Book I, while the doxology in Psalm 41:13 concludes Book I (see Bratcher & Reyburn, 1991:14; Wilson, 2002:89; 2005:237). Psalms 3-41 are all Davidic psalms except Psalms 10 and 33. Book I is mainly characterised by individual psalms and pleas for deliverance (Wilson, 2002:89). Book I can be further subdivided into the following groups: Psalms 3-14; 15-24; 25-34 and 35-41 (Jüngling, 1998: 783-784). Within the last subgroup, Psalms 35-37 focus on instruction concerning evil in the world and Psalms 38-41 are pleas for deliverance (Wilson, 2002:90).

From the above discussion on the general structure and the subdivisions of Book I, Psalm 35 can be read together with the psalms in the fourth subgroup of Book I of the Psalter, Psalms 35-41. The significant patterns, topics or themes in Psalms 35-41 may indicate that the canonical context does shed light on Psalm 35.

Psalm 35, its antecedent (Psalm 34) and Psalms 36-41 in the fourth subgroup, are inter-related through many common words, phrases and themes. Psalms 35-41 share common vocabulary:

**Common vocabulary shared by Psalms 34 and 35**

|                 |                       |       |                           |
|-----------------|-----------------------|-------|---------------------------|
| רדף             | to pursue             | 34:15 | 35:3, 6                   |
| נַפְשִׁי        | my soul               | 34:3  | 35:3, 4, 7, 9, 12, 13, 17 |
| בִּקֵּשׁ        | to seek               | 34:15 | 35:4                      |
| יְשׁוּעָה       | salvation, save       | 34:7  | 35:3, 9                   |
| כָּלֵם          | my dishonour          | 34:22 | 35:4                      |
| כָּל עַצְמוֹתַי | all my/their bones    | 34:21 | 35:10                     |
| נִצַּל          | to deliver            | 34:5  | 35:10                     |
| עָנִי           | afflicted             | 34:7  | 35:10                     |
| טוֹב / רָעָה    | evil/good             | 34:15 | 35:12                     |
| שִׂמְחָה        | to rejoice            | 34:3  | 35:15, 19, 24, 27         |
| כַּפִּירִים     | young lions           | 34:11 | 35:17                     |
| שׂוֹנְאֵי       | those who hate        | 34:22 | 35:19                     |
| שָׁלוֹם         | peace                 | 34:15 | 35:20                     |
| דְּבַר מִרְמוֹת | speaking deceit       | 34:14 | 35:20                     |
| פִּיהֶם         | their mouth/ my mouth | 34:2  | 35:21                     |
| עֵינֵינוּ       | our eyes/ eyes        | 34:16 | 35:21                     |
| גָּדַל          | to magnify            | 34:4  | 35:26                     |
| תְּפִיץ         | delight               | 34:13 | 35:27                     |
| תָּמִיד         | always                | 34:2  | 35:27                     |
| תְּהַלֵּלָהּ    | praise                | 34:2  | 35:27                     |

**Common vocabulary shared by Psalms 36 and 35**

|           |          |      |                |
|-----------|----------|------|----------------|
| עֶבֶד     | servant  | 36:1 | 35:27          |
| עֵין      | eyes     | 36:2 | 35: 19, 21, 22 |
| חֲלָק     | slippery | 36:3 | 35:6           |
| שָׂנֵא    | to hate  | 36:3 | 35:19          |
| כִּי      | for      | 36:3 | 35:7           |
| דַּבְּרִי | speak    | 36:4 | 35:20          |
| פֶּה      | mouth(s) | 36:4 | 35:21          |
| מִרְמָה   | deceit   | 36:4 | 35:20          |

|       |                    |            |                      |
|-------|--------------------|------------|----------------------|
| יטב   | do good            | 36:4       | 35:12                |
| חשב   | to devise          | 36:5       | 35:20                |
| דרך   | path               | 36:5       | 35:6                 |
| רע    | evil               | 36:5       | 35:12                |
| יהוה  | YHWH               | 36:6, 7    | 35:9, 10, 22, 24, 27 |
| צדקתך | your righteousness | 36:7, 11   | 35:24, 28            |
| משפט  | judgment(s)        | 36:7       | 35:23                |
| רב    | great              | 36:7       | 35:18                |
| ישע   | to save            | 36:7       | 35:17                |
| אלהים | God                | 36:1, 7, 8 | 35:23                |
| ראה   | to see             | 36:10      | 35:21, 22            |
| לב    | heart              | 36:11      | 35:25                |
| נפל   | to fall            | 36:13      | 35:9                 |
| דחה   | to chase, thrust   | 36:12      | 35:5                 |
| קום   | to arise           | 36:13      | 35:2                 |

**Common vocabulary shared by Psalms 37 and 35**

|       |                    |  |                      |
|-------|--------------------|--|----------------------|
| יהוה  | YHWH               | 37:3, 4, 5, 7, 9, 17, 18, 20, 23, 24, 28, 33, 34, 39, 40 | 35:9, 10, 22, 24, 27 |
| טוב   | good               | 37:3, 16   | 35:20                |
| ארץ   | land/ earth        | 37:3, 9, 11, 22  | 35:20                |
| לב    | heart              | 37:4, 15, 31   | 35:25                |
| דרך   | path               | 37:5, 7, 14, 23  | 35:6                 |
| צדקתך | your righteousness | 37:6   | 35:24, 28            |
| משפט  | judgment(s)        | 37:6, 28   | 35:23                |
| עניו  | afflicted          | 37:11  | 35:10                |

|                  |                     |               |               |
|------------------|---------------------|---------------|---------------|
| שָׁלוֹם          | peace               | 37:11, 37     | 35:20, 27     |
| חָרַק            | to gnash teeth      | 37:12         | 35:16         |
| אֲדֹנָי          | the lord            | 37:13         | 35:17, 22, 23 |
| רָאָה            | to see              | 37:13, 25, 34 | 35:21, 22     |
| עָנִי וְאֶבְיוֹן | afflicted and needy | 37:14         | 35:10         |
| רַב              | great/ many         | 37:16         | 35:18         |
| יִבְשׁוּ         | to be ashamed       | 37:19         | 35:4, 26      |
| רָע              | evil                | 37:19, 27     | 35:4, 12      |
| חִפְּץ           | to delight          | 37:23         | 35:27         |
| נָפַל            | to fall             | 37:24         | 35:9          |
| פֶּה             | mouth(s)            | 37:30         | 35:21         |
| אֱלֹהִים         | God                 | 37:31         | 35:23         |
| בִּקֵּשׁ         | to seek             | 37:25, 32, 36 | 35:4          |
| לְשׁוֹן          | tongue              | 37:30         | 35:28         |
| שִׁפְט           | to be judged/ judge | 37:33         | 35:24         |
| יְשׁוּעָה        | salvation           | 37:39         | 35:3, 9       |

### Common vocabulary shared by Psalms 38 and 35

|         |               |               |                      |
|---------|---------------|---------------|----------------------|
| יְהוָה  | YHWH          | 38:2, 16, 22  | 35:9, 10, 22, 24, 27 |
| שָׁלוֹם | peace         | 38:4          | 35:20, 27            |
| עֲצָם   | bones         | 38:4          | 35:10                |
| קָדַר   | dark          | 38:7          | 35:14                |
| שָׁחָה  | to bowed down | 38:7          | 35:14                |
| לֵב     | heart         | 38:9, 11      | 35:25                |
| אֲדֹנָי | the lord      | 38:10, 16, 23 | 35:17, 22, 23        |
| עֵין    | eye(s)        | 38:11         | 35:21                |

|                                   |                                  |           |                           |
|-----------------------------------|----------------------------------|-----------|---------------------------|
| רַע                               | friend                           | 38:12     | 35:14                     |
| מִבְּקֵשֵׁי נַפְשִׁי              | who seek my life                 | 38:13     | 35:4                      |
| נַפֶּשׁ                           | soul                             | 38:13     | 35:3, 4, 7, 9, 12, 13, 17 |
| רָעָתִי                           | evil against me                  | 38:13     | 35:4                      |
| מִרְמָה                           | deceit                           | 38:13     | 35:20                     |
| פֶּה                              | mouth(s)                         | 38:14, 15 | 35:21                     |
| אלהים                             | God                              | 38:16, 22 | 35:23                     |
| יִשְׂמְחֵהוּלִי                   | rejoice over me                  | 38:17     | 35:19, 24                 |
| גָּדַל                            | to make great/ magnify           | 38:17     | 35:26, 27                 |
| צָלַע                             | limp/ stumble                    | 38:18     | 35:15                     |
| שָׂנֵא                            | hate                             | 38:20     | 35:19                     |
| שָׁקַר                            | wrongfully                       | 38:19     | 35:20                     |
| מִשְׁלָמֵי רָעָה<br>תַּחַת טוֹבָה | those who repay evil<br>for good | 38:21     | 35:12                     |
| רָדַף                             | to pursue                        | 38:21     | 35:3, 6                   |
| אַל-תִּרְחַק מִמּוֹנִי            | do not be far from me            | 38:22     | 35:22                     |
| יְשׁוּעָה                         | salvation                        | 38:23     | 35:3, 9                   |

### Common vocabulary shared by Psalms 39 and 35

|         |          |          |                      |
|---------|----------|----------|----------------------|
| אָמַר   | say      | 39:2     | 35:3, 10, 25, 27     |
| דֶּרֶךְ | path     | 39:2     | 35:6                 |
| פֶּה    | mouth(s) | 39:2     | 35:21                |
| טוֹב    | good     | 39:3     | 35:20                |
| לֵב     | heart    | 39:4, 11 | 35:25                |
| לְשׁוֹן | tongue   | 39:4     | 35:28                |
| יְהוָה  | YHWH     | 39:5, 13 | 35:9, 10, 22, 24, 27 |

|               |                 |         |               |
|---------------|-----------------|---------|---------------|
| ידע           | to know         | 39:5, 7 | 35:11, 15     |
| אסף           | to gather       | 39:7    | 35:15         |
| אֲדֹנָי       | the Lord        | 39:8    | 35:17, 22, 23 |
| נצל           | to deliver      | 39:9    | 35:10         |
| אל־תִּחַרֵּשׁ | don't be silent | 39:13   | 35:22         |

### Common vocabulary shared by Psalms 40 and 35

|                             |   |                            |                      |
|-----------------------------|---|----------------------------|----------------------|
| יהוה                        | YHWH  | 40:2, 4, 6, 10, 12, 14, 17 | 35:9, 10, 22, 24, 27 |
| קום                         | to arise                                      | 40:3                       | 35:2, 11             |
| פה                          | mouth(s)                                      | 40:4                       | 35:21                |
| תְּהַלֵּל                   | praise  | 40:4                       | 35:28                |
| אלהים                       | God   | 40:4, 6, 9, 18             | 35:23                |
| ראה                         | to see  | 40:4, 13                   | 35:21, 22            |
| רב                          | great/ many                                   | 40:4, 6                    | 35:18                |
| חפץ                         | to delight                                    | 40:7, 9                    | 35:27                |
| אמר                         | to say  | 40:8, 11, 17               | 35:3, 10, 25, 27     |
| צְדָק                       | righteousness                                 | 40:10, 11                  | 35:24, 28            |
| בְּקִהְלֵי רַב              | great congregation                            | 40:10, 11                  | 35:18                |
| ידע                         | to know                                       | 40:10                      | 35:11, 15            |
| לב                          | heart   | 40:11, 13                  | 35:25                |
| יְשׁוּעָה                   | salvation                                     | 40:11                      | 35:3, 9              |
| אסף                         | to gather/ surround                           | 40:13                      | 35:15                |
| רָע                         | evil  | 40:13                      | 35:4, 12             |
| נצל                         | to deliver                                    | 40:14                      | 35:10                |
| יִבְשׂוּ וְיִחַפְּרוּ יַחַד | let them be ashamed and humiliated altogether | 40:15                      | 35:26                |

|                                 |                              |       |       |
|---------------------------------|------------------------------|-------|-------|
| מִבְּקֵשֵׁי נַפְשִׁי            | who seek my life             | 40:15 | 35:4  |
| יִסְגּוּ אַחֲוֹר                | let them be turned back      | 40:15 | 35:4  |
| וַיִּבְלְמוּ                    | let them be dishonoured      | 40:15 | 35:4  |
| רָעָתִי                         | evil against me              | 40:15 | 35:4  |
| בִּשְׁת                         | shame                        | 40:16 | 35:25 |
| הַאֲמָרִים לִי<br>הָאֵחַ הָאֵחַ | who say to me "aha!<br>aha!" | 40:16 | 35:21 |
| שׂוֹשׁ                          | to exult/ rejoice            | 40:17 | 35:9  |
| שִׂמְחָה                        | rejoice                      | 40:17 | 35:27 |
| בִּקֵּשׁ                        | to seek                      | 40:17 | 35:4  |
| יִגְדַּל יְהוָה                 | YHWH is great                | 40:17 | 35:27 |
| עָנִי וְאֲבִיוֹן                | afflicted and needy          | 40:18 | 35:10 |

### Common vocabulary shared by Psalms 41 and 35

|         |              |                       |                           |
|---------|--------------|-----------------------|---------------------------|
| יהוה    | YHWH         | 41:2, 3, 4, 5, 11, 14 | 35:9, 10, 22, 24, 27      |
| אֶרֶץ   | earth/ land  | 41:3                  | 35:20                     |
| נַפֶּשׁ | soul         | 41:3, 5               | 35:3, 4, 7, 9, 12, 13, 17 |
| אָמַר   | to say       | 41:5, 6               | 35:3, 10, 25, 27          |
| רָע     | evil         | 41:6, 8               | 35:4, 12                  |
| רָאָה   | to see       | 41:7                  | 35:21, 22                 |
| לֵב     | heart        | 41:7                  | 35:25                     |
| יַחַד   | altogether   | 41:8                  | 35:26                     |
| שָׂנֵא  | to hate      | 41:8                  | 35:19                     |
| דְּבָר  | word/ speech | 41:9                  | 35:20                     |
| קוּם    | to arise     | 41:9, 11              | 35:2, 11                  |
| שָׁלוֹם | peace        | 41:10, 11             | 35:20, 27                 |

|        |               |       |           |
|--------|---------------|-------|-----------|
| גָּדַל | to make great | 41:10 | 35:26, 27 |
| יָדַע  | to know       | 41:12 | 35:11, 15 |
| חָפֵץ  | to delight    | 41:12 | 35:27     |

Psalm 35 is an individual lament; its antecedent Psalm 34 is a song of thanksgiving. The contrasts between the two psalms are highlighted by their common vocabulary: the life ordered and rescued by God in Psalm 34 is contrasted to the life threatened by the enemies and pursuers in Psalm 35. The things that Psalm 34 gives thanks for and offers teaching on are not experienced as realities in Psalm 35. For example, the psalmist in Psalm 34 experiences YHWH's salvation (34:4, 17, 19) and help towards the afflicted (34:6 cf. 2), whereas the psalmist in Psalm 35 acknowledges the fact that God saves (35:1-3) and helps the afflicted (35:9-10). The psalmist in Psalm 35 vows to praise YHWH because of his incomparability, and because he delivers the weak and the afflicted. In Psalm 34, the psalmist experiences the presence of the angel of YHWH (verse 7) and the nearness of YHWH (verses 15, 18) and this inspires him to praise YHWH, whereas in Psalm 35 YHWH's nearness (verse 22) and the presence of his angel (verses 5-6) are objects of petitions. Psalm 34 teaches ethics of solidarity ("turn from evil and do good seek peace and pursue it") in verse 14, whereas Psalm 35 laments over people who reward good with evil (35:12) and destroy peace (35:20) (see Jüngling, 1998:814).

Following on the lament over the wicked enemies in Psalm 35, Psalm 36 gives a thorough analysis on the character of the godless and offers a praise of the righteousness of YHWH to which appeal was made in Psalm 35. In both psalms, the psalmist's enemies or the wicked are characterised by deceitful words (35:20; 36:4) and do not do good (35:12-16; 36:4). The theme of YHWH's righteousness is seen in both psalms: in Psalm 35, the psalmist asks YHWH to judge him in his righteousness (verse 24) and in Psalm 36, the psalmist exhorts God to continue to show his righteousness to the upright in heart (verse 10).

The theme of doing good is also seen in Psalm 37. Unlike the wicked who do not do good, the righteous are exhorted to do good (verse 3 cf. 35:12; 36:4). The theme of the wicked plotting evil and gnashing their teeth against the righteous is seen in Psalms 35 and 37 (see 35:7-8; 37:12; 35:16; 37:12). In Psalm 35:10, YHWH delivers the afflicted and needy from their oppressors and in contrast the wicked plot to use their weapons against them and even to kill them (Psalm 37:14). Psalm 35 laments over the wicked enemies who directed their deceitful

words against the peace loving people of the land (35:20) and in Psalm 37 the wicked's seeming prosperity is transitory, and they are going to be cut off (37:1-9), while the afflicted or humble shall inherit the land and enjoy abundant peace (37:11).

Psalm 35 shares a number of common themes with Psalm 38. In both psalms, the psalmist observes mourning rituals (35:14; 38:7-8). The theme that the psalmist's enemies are seeking to kill him and have prepared snares or traps, which refers to the crafty or treacherous plans of the wicked in Psalm 35:4, 7-8 is reiterated in Psalm 38:12. In Psalms 35 and 38, the psalmist's enemies magnify themselves over the psalmist (35:26; 38:17), without justification, they repay good with evil (35:12; 38:21) and their hatred is inspired by their own sinfulness (35:19; 38:19). In both psalms, the psalmist does not want his enemies to rejoice over him (35:19, 24-25; 38:17) and he does not want God to forsake him/ to be far away from him, but to intervene and to help him in his time of need (35:22-23; 38:22 cf. 39:13). In both psalms, YHWH is the psalmist's salvation (35:3; 38:22).

Psalm 35 has few thematic links with Psalm 39. Both psalms speak of the distress of the suppliant (35:11-12. 15-16; 39:2-3). In both psalms, the suppliant is in need of deliverance and he makes an urgent call for YHWH to deliver him from his predicament (35:1-3, 22-24; 39:12-13).

Psalm 35 also shares a number of common themes with Psalm 40. In both psalms, the psalmist makes an urgent call for YHWH to deliver him from his enemies (40:14, 18; 35:1-3, 17, 22-23) because his enemies want to take the psalmist's life (40:15; 35:4) and are rejoicing over him saying "Aha, aha!" (40:15; 35:25). Therefore, in both psalms, the psalmist wants YHWH to put to shame and dishonour his enemies (40:15; 35:26, 4). In both psalms, the psalmist also calls the righteous to praise YHWH (40:17; 35:27). Both psalms speak of the great congregation in which the speakers raise their voices to praise God (40:10-11; 35:18). In Psalm 35, the psalmist implies that he is afflicted and needy (verse 10), whereas in Psalm 40, the psalmist explicitly says that he is afflicted and needy (verse 18). Psalm 40:15-17 generally correspond to Psalm 35:25-27, thus forming an inclusion for the fourth sub-section in the first Book of Psalms (Jüngling, 1998: 814; 820).

Therefore, Psalm 35, its antecedent Psalm 34, and the fourth subgroup (35-41) have important philological and thematic links. The most common theme in this group of psalms is the theme of deliverance: YHWH is the psalmist's salvation or deliverance. YHWH alone is a refuge

in times of trouble (see McGrath, 1984:154). He rescues the afflicted and needy from their oppressors, the wicked. YHWH rescues the afflicted by punishing the wicked and bringing shame and dishonour to them. Among these psalms, our imprecatory Psalm 35 provides admonition to the followers of YHWH. The psalm exhorts the listeners/readers to call on YHWH rather than to rely on themselves whenever they are being persecuted by their enemies because YHWH is the divine warrior who will fight and defend his people from their oppressors. YHWH is also the all-seeing witness and judge. YHWH is a righteous judge and the champion of justice. He sees and knows all that is going on. He is going to execute his justice by delivering and vindicating the righteous and by punishing the wicked in his own time. Therefore the listeners/readers should continuously trust in YHWH, in the midst of difficulties or persecution, for their deliverance and refuge.

## **2.8 Imprecatory implications in Psalm 35**

The content of Psalm 35 has shown a number of metaphors: for God (warrior and judge), the psalmist (a victim on the battlefield and in the law of court) and for the enemies (army, hunters, violent witnesses).

The psalm also shows that the psalmist is thirsting for justice (see Clifford, 2002:180-181). The psalmist is innocent and he is the victim of his enemies. His enemies are devising evil, plotting to kill him and pursuing him (verse 4). He is innocent (verses 7, 13-14, 19). His enemies have falsely accused him of things or crimes that he does not know (verses 11b, 21). They have mocked and ridiculed the psalmist publicly in a scornful manner (verses 19-21). Therefore, he pleads for justice on the grounds that God's justice should prevail at all times (verses 7-8; 11-12; 19-24). Justice is the general tenor of the psalm. The psalmist asks YHWH to set things right as the divine warrior, advocate and judge because his glory and righteousness are at stake (verses 9-10; 22-24; 28) if the suffering of the innocent continues in the hands of the wicked or the unrighteous. God's work of setting things right in the world (verses 22-24, 27), will necessarily mean that God fights (verses 1-10) and judges the wicked, hence the military and courtroom imagery are understandable and appropriate. The psalmist is confident that if YHWH is to act as a judge, he would be declared righteous while his detractors would be found guilty and be humiliated and disgraced publicly. YHWH's greatness is seen in his pleasure to set

things right for the suffering and the vulnerable - thus providing peace to his servants (verse 27). Therefore the psalmist is not so much wishing his enemy to be cursed or to be punished severely, but rather he is propelled by a desire for righteousness and justice to prevail with all the necessary consequences (see verses 9-10; 22-24; 28).

The psalmist's prayer against the enemies is not a selfish, vengeful prayer. He does not have a vindictive spirit toward his enemies. The psalmist is not looking for his enemies' downfall for the sake of vengeance. Although the psalmist prayed at great length about his attackers' downfall, the object of the psalmist's rejoicing is not their downfall but YHWH's deliverance (verse 9). The focus of this psalm is not on personal revenge, but on YHWH's deliverance. The occasion of the psalmist's thanksgiving (verses 9-10; 18 and 28) is YHWH's deliverance. The psalmist vows to praise YHWH because he delivers his people from the oppressor (verses 9-10, 27). YHWH's deliverance of the psalmist is the main theme of the whole psalm. The canonical context of Psalm 35, Psalms 35-41 also confirms this as the main theme.

Throughout Psalm 35, the psalmist is also portrayed as not having a vindictive spirit. His past conduct is contrasted to that of his attackers. When his attackers were sick he was very sympathetic. He wore sackcloth, fasted, prayed for them and mourned for them as if they were his own friends or relatives (verses 13-14). In other words, the psalmist is shown to be like the New Testament believer: he loves his enemies as he loves himself, when they are sick he prays and fasts for them as if they were his own nearest kin (cf. Matt 5:44; Luke 6:27-35). The psalmist emphasises his pure motives in a number of ways:

- In 24a, the suppliant asks YHWH to judge him. Vindication comes not only when the enemies are the object of God's judgement, but also the suppliant's own heart and motives.
- The psalm starts with battle imagery – even mentioning the spear and pike (3a), which could be used to kill the enemies of the suppliant. However, there is a development. The metaphor of battle gives way to the court metaphor. Although the suppliant wanted to invoke force, he eventually settles for justice, where the enemies are humiliated and silenced (verses 4, 26).
- In the end God's glory becomes more important than vengeance. Thus the psalm shows initial violent emotions which are tempered and made servile to God's glory.

The psalmist in Psalm 35 is not vengeful in act or spirit. In response to his enemies' hostility, the psalmist does not retaliate but he entrusts vengeance to God (verse 17). The

psalmist submits his prayer to God and leaves vengeance to God. It is YHWH who is to punish the enemies rather than the psalmist. It is YHWH who is to disgrace and humiliate his enemies (verses 4 & 26).

The psalmist also prays for an inversion of roles – he wants his enemies to get a dose of their own medicine.

- Since the enemies were pursuing the psalmist (verse 3a), the psalmist asks God to fight for him (verses 1-3). He wants the angel of YHWH to pursue his enemies (verses 5-6). He wants his enemies to experience the total humiliating defeat that they had planned for him.
- Since the enemies had hid a net for the psalmist (verse 7), the psalmist prays for his enemies to be caught in the very trap or treachery they had intended for him (verse 8). The enemies are to experience what they had in store for the psalmist.
- Since the psalmist's affliction by the enemies was enacted publicly before others (verses 11-12; 15-16; 21), the psalmist prays for his enemies to be ashamed and humiliated publicly (verse 4; 26). The psalmist is also confident that he will proclaim thanksgiving and praise publicly, in the gathering of God's people (verse 18).
- Since the psalmist was mocked publicly by his enemies which brought about shame and disgrace (verse 20-21), his enemies are to be ashamed and humiliated publicly. The suppliant, who has been humiliated, is now confident that YHWH will set things right, thus acting for the sake of this servant's peace (verses 26-28).

The psalmist's vindication and the condemnation of the enemy lead to public acclamation of the righteousness and justice of God. The public discrediting of the wicked enables the righteous to see God at work, delighting in his servant's peace and thus they proclaim "YHWH is great" (35:27). The psalmist will offer public testimony "YHWH, who is like you?" (35:10), he will give thanks and praise YHWH in the great congregation (35:18) and he will speak of YHWH's righteousness and praise all day long (35:28).

The psalm encourages readers/listeners who find themselves in a life-threatening situation similar to the psalmist's, to pray to YHWH, asking him to execute his justice as the divine warrior, advocate and judge. Just like the psalmist, the readers/listeners are to not to

have a vindictive spirit towards their enemies but they are to desire YHWH's righteousness and justice to prevail with all the necessary consequences such as deliverance for God's people and punishment on the wicked. This psalm informs the readers that YHWH delights in setting things right for the suffering and the vulnerable. This psalm also implies that readers/listeners should show love and concern for their enemies. In response to their enemies' hostility, the readers/listeners should not retaliate but offer their prayers to God and entrust vengeance to him.