

Psalms 33 — The Word That Made the Heavens — A New Song for the Creator, the Lord of the Nations, and the Eye That Watches Over Those Who Hope

Psalm 33: an untitled hymn of praise — the congregation is called to a new song because the God whose word is right and whose works are true made the heavens by that word, brings the plans of the nations to nothing, watches every heart from heaven, and keeps his eye on those who fear him and hope in his mercy. A creation-and-providence psalm, likely gathered for temple worship; no superscription, no date, deliberately timeless.

Psalm 33 opens without a title. Most of the psalms around it carry a superscription — "A Psalm of David," a note about the choir, a musical instruction — but this one begins bare, with an imperative: *Rejoice*. The Hebrew tradition sometimes read it as a continuation of Psalm 32, whose closing line ("be glad in the LORD, and rejoice, ye righteous") is nearly the sentence this psalm now expands into a whole hymn. Whatever the reason for its silence, the effect is that Psalm 33 belongs to no single moment. It is not tied to a war, a coronation, or a personal crisis. It is worship in its purest key: a congregation standing before its God and telling the truth about him.

Hebrew Word Studies

davar (H1697) / ruach (H7307) (דָּבָר / רוּחַ) — **word, speech, matter, thing / breath, wind, spirit vv. 4, 6.** The two words of verse 6 are the two hands of creation. *Davar* — "word" — is the psalm's spine: "the word of the LORD is right" (v. 4), "by the word of the LORD were the heavens made" (v. 6). It means more than speech; it means the *matter*, the *thing itself*, so that in Hebrew what God says and what then exists are barely distinguishable — which is exactly the point of verse 9, "he spake, and it was done." Beside it stands *ruach*: breath, wind, spirit. "All the host of them by the breath of his mouth." The same word names the Spirit that "moved upon the face of the waters" in Genesis 1:2 and the breath God breathes into Adam's nostrils in Genesis 2:7. So creation is spoken (*davar*) and breathed (*ruach*) in one line — and the pairing is not decorative. It teaches that the God who commands the cosmos is the same God who animates a body, that the power holding the stars in place is the power keeping you alive this moment. "By the word of the LORD were the heavens made" is the verse the Book of Mormon prophets carry forward: "by the power of his word man came upon the face of the earth" (Jacob 4:9). The stars and the soul come from the same mouth.

chadash (H2319) / shir (H7892) (חֲדָשׁ / שִׁיר) — **new, fresh, renewed / song v. 3.** *Shir chadash* — "a new song." *Chadash* is not merely "recent"; its verb-root means to *renew*, to make fresh, the same root behind the renewing of the new moon and, gloriously, behind Lamentations' promise that the Lord's mercies "are new every morning" (Lam. 3:23). A *new* song, then, is not a novelty for its own sake but the only honest response to *new* mercy — you cannot answer a fresh act of God with a stale sentiment. The phrase recurs across the Psalter (Ps. 40:3; 96:1; 98:1) and lands finally in the Restoration, where the risen Lord gives his covenant people the words of "a new song" of "redeeming love" (D&C 84:98–102) that "all the sanctified may hear it and rejoice." Notice who gets to sing it: the redeemed, the sanctified — those with something new to sing *about*. The command to "sing unto him a new song" is therefore an invitation to have a story worth a fresh melody: to be delivered, and then to compose.

etsah (H6098) (עֵצָה) — **counsel, plan, purpose, advice vv. 10, 11.** One Hebrew word, two destinies. *Etsah* is counsel — a plan, a deliberated purpose. In verse 10 it belongs to the nations ("the counsel of the heathen"), and God "bringeth" it "to nought." In verse 11 it belongs to God ("the counsel of the LORD standeth for ever"). The psalm sets the two side by side to make a single claim: every human plan is provisional, and one divine plan is permanent. The root (*ya'ats*, to advise, to counsel) runs through Isaiah's great title for the Messiah — "Wonderful, *Counselor*" (Isa. 9:6) — and through the promise that God's "*counsel* shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure" (Isa. 46:10). It is the same conviction Nephi's father dies teaching: that "the Lord is able to do all things according to his will, for the children of men, if it so be that they exercise faith in him" — his counsel holds. For the worshipper, the practical comfort is enormous. You do not have to be able to see how the tangled plans of powerful people will resolve; you only have to know whose *etsah* outlasts them all.

goy (H1471) (גּוֹי) — **nation, people, gentile vv. 10, 12.** The same word carries the psalm's turn. *Goy* is "nation" — in verse 10 (as "heathen") the plural *goyim* names the nations whose counsel comes to nought; in verse 12 the singular *goy* names the blessed nation "whose God is the LORD." One word, and everything hinges on the possessive: not the strong nation, the rich nation, the numerous nation, but the nation that *belongs to God* and to whom God belongs. This is the vocabulary of covenant. Abraham was promised that in him "shall all the *nations* of the earth be blessed" (Gen. 22:18; echoed to the Nephites), and the

whole Old Testament is the story of one *goy* set apart so that all the *goyim* might eventually be gathered. The psalm quietly universalizes the blessing: any people, in any age, that makes the LORD its God steps out of verse 10 and into verse 12. Nationhood is not the point; allegiance is. "Blessed is the nation whose God is the LORD" is less a boast about Israel than an offer to the world.

ayin (H5869) (אֵין) — eye; also spring, fountain v. 18. "Behold, the *eye* of the LORD." *Ayin* is the ordinary Hebrew word for eye — but it is also the word for a *spring* of water, a fountain in the desert (the same word names En-gedi, "spring of the kid"). The overlap is quietly perfect here: after the psalm has drained every human source of safety, it points to the LORD's *ayin* — at once the eye that *sees* the faithful and, by the word's own second meaning, the fountain that *sustains* them "in famine" (v. 19). This is the tender heart of the psalm. Elsewhere the same image comforts: "I will guide thee with mine *eye*" (Ps. 32:8, the psalm just before this one); "the *eyes* of the LORD run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to shew himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward him" (2 Chr. 16:9). The Almighty who "beholdeth all the sons of men" (v. 13) is not a watcher on a wall counting faults; his eye is a fountain, and it rests on those who hope in his mercy.

yachal (H3176) / batach (H982) (יָחַל / בָּטַח) — to hope, to wait, to trust / to trust, to rely, to feel secure vv. 18, 21, 22.

Two verbs frame the psalm's ending, and together they name the whole posture of faith. *Yachal* — "hope" — appears in verse 18 ("them that hope in his mercy") and again in the last line, verse 22 ("according as we *hope* in thee"). It is not wishful thinking; it is *waiting with expectation*, the hope of the watchman for the morning (Ps. 130:5–6), a hope with its face turned toward a promise. Beside it stands *batach* — "trusted" — in verse 21: "we have *trusted* in his holy name." *Batach* is the sturdier word, to lean one's full weight on something, to feel *secure* — the very security the king, the mighty man, and the horse could not provide (vv. 16–17). So the psalm ends by relocating security: not in the arm of flesh, but in the name of the God who made the heavens. To *batach* is to rest your weight; to *yachal* is to wait for the outcome. The faithful do both — they lean on the holy name now and hope in the mercy still coming. It is Nephi's exact confession: "I have *trusted* in thee, and I will *trust* in thee for ever" (2 Ne. 4:34), and Proverbs' whole counsel in one line: "*Trust* in the LORD with all thine heart" (Prov. 3:5).

From the Chapter's Architecture

The movement is a descent that is also an ascent — from the heavens (vv. 4–9) down to the earth's nations (vv. 10–12), down again to individual human hearts (vv. 13–15), and finally to the single soul that waits (vv. 20). The camera pulls in tighter with each panel, and the effect is intimacy: the same God who spoke galaxies is the God watching you. This is Hebrew parallelism doing theology — the pairing of "word" and "works," "spoke" and "commanded," "help" and "shield" is not ornament but argument, each doubled line pressing the same truth twice so it cannot be missed. There is no formal chiasm spanning the whole psalm; its artistry is the frame (praise / trust) around the widening-then-narrowing sweep, not a mirror-structure, and it would be dishonest to force one. What the psalm does have is an inclusio of a kind — it begins with the LORD's word (v. 4) and the counsel that standeth (v. 11), and it ends with the people who trust that word and wait on it. The song has traveled from the heavens to a waiting heart, and found the same God at both ends.