Psalm xxxii is not an easy one. It starts with an opening which is met with in nomistic Psalms, but then it turns off (v. 3) to strains proper of Psalms of lamentation. You listen to the “confession” ¹) of the psalmist (v. 5) and you are abruptly confronted with a new change in thought: the trust of the faithful in a prompt delivery from distress in the time of inundation and of rushing waters. Then again the psalmist reverts to the trend of thought of the opening, i.e. to a parenetic content (v. 8-11).

The apparent lack of logical sequence and the difficulty of interpretation thereby following, is still aggravated by the fact that the text has come down to us in a somewhat bad condition. Many a commentator feels obliged to alter the order of the verses and to correct the text in a number of passages. But it is not our purpose here to grapple with all the different problems of the Psalm, as it would take us too far, with the risk of not adding very much to the contributions of so many eminent scholars and critics. There is however one passage which we deem rather important, and which the critics’ many guesses and corrections have not succeeded in patching up satisfactorily at all. We refer to v. 9. The solution (or what we hopefully consider the solution) occurred to us a few years ago, during World War II, while preparing the (Italian) translation and critical apparatus of the whole Psalter in view of a Commentary which is now drawing to completion. We anticipate it here as it might appeal to those who are interested in the Psalms.

The key to the understanding of the verse is the unfortunately unintelligible מַעֲמֹר; but up to now, as far as we know, nobody has

¹) For the technical meaning of “confession” in the Psalms of lamentation the reader may refer to G. Castellino, Le Lamentazioni e gli Inni in Babilonia e in Israele raffrontate riguardo alla forma e al contenuto, Torino, 1940, p. 133 f.
succeeded in solving the riddle. DUHM ¹), for instance, thought he could emend the passage by suppressing the words יִשְׂכַּד לְבָנָה יִבְרָא which he considers as a gloss. הָיוֹן has been changed from הַלְבָנָה and the יִהְיוּנָה has been joined to הַלְבָנָה (for יִבְרָא). V. 9b therefore reads, after DUHM: „Das mit Zugel und Kappzaum Man zu dir bringen muss". He has been followed by H. SCHMIDT ²) and, in part, by BRIGGS ³), who accepts הָיוֹן from DUHM and translates: “to be muzzled”.

Those who accept the masoretic reading יִשְׂכַּד יִשְׂכַּד derive it from יִשְׂכַּד “ornament, Schmuck”; but, as this meaning does not suit the context, they ply the word to signify “harness, trappings”. Thus BRIGGS, KIRKPATRICK ⁴), EERDMANS ⁵), etc.—However, many are not satisfied with this interpretation and try to better the text by emending it. In this line we can, for instance, quote BRUNO ⁶), followed by HERKENNE ⁷) and PODECHARD ⁸), who adopts the reading יִשְׂכַּד יִשְׂכַּד and translates: “deren ‘Hitzé’ nur gebändigt wird…”. HERKENNE translates with “dessen Wildheit”, and PODECHARD with “fougue”.

Others still accept the correction first proposed by SCHLOGL ⁹), and change יִשְׂכַּד in יִשְׂכַּד, litt. “its strength”, though giving it a meaning more suitable to the context: “pride, Trotz” and the like. See KITTEL ¹⁰), GUNKEL ¹¹), BUTTENWIESER ¹²), etc. — Finally others have accepted EHRLICH’s conjecture from Arab. 'adwun “the horse’s run”, and see in יִשְׂכַּד the impetus of a fiery horse, reverting in this way to a meaning very similar to that proposed by BRUNO, etc. So BAETHGEN ¹³), CALÈS ¹⁴), New Roman Psalter ¹⁵), etc. BAETHGEN changes הַלְבָנָה to

¹) B. DUHM, Psalmen, 2. Aufl., 1922.
²) H. SCHMIDT, Die Psalmen, 1934.
⁶) A. BRUNO, Der Rhythmus der alttestamentlichen Dichtung, Leipzig, 1930.
⁷) H. HERKENNE, Das Buch der Psalmen (Bonner Bibel), Bonn, 1936.
⁹) N. J. SCHLOGL, Die heiligen Schriften des alten Bundes, III 1 Psalmen, 1915.
¹⁰) R. KITTEL, Psalmen, 3.4 Aufl., 1921.
¹¹) H. GUNKEL, Die Psalmen, Göttingen, 1926.
¹³) FR. BAETHGEN, Psalmen, 2. Aufl., 1904.