

Introduction to Book II (Psalms 42-72)

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Overview of the Numerical Features of the Psalms in Book II

Unlike the predominantly Davidic psalms in Book I, which are not subdivided in terms of authorship, those of Book II are indeed grouped as the products of authors, of which 4 are named and 3 nameless. There appear to be at least four components:

- Psalms 42-49 **7** Korahite psalms - 42 and 43 are a single composition - MT has 8)
- Psalm 50 **1** Asaphite psalm
- Psalms 51-57 **7** Davidic psalms
- Psalms 58-64 **7** Davidic psalms
- Psalms 65-71 **7** psalms: **1** Davidic + **2** nameless + **3** Davidic + **1** nameless
- Psalm 72 **1** Solomonite psalm

30 psalms: **18** Davidic, **7** Korahite, **3** nameless, **1** Asaphite, **1** Solomonite; MT has **31**.

In order to determine the relationship between the components in terms of numerical composition, I shall begin by presenting an overview of the numerical features of these psalms in the following Tables:

Table V: supposed authorship, the number of Masoretic verses, the occurrences of the name YHWH, the word *'elohim* and other divine designations;

Table VI: the number of poetic verselines, the total number of words, and the words before and after *atnach* (*excluding* the headings and *selahs*);

Table VII: the total number of words, and the words before and after *atnach* (*including* headings, with and without the *selahs*);

Table VIII: the word-count of the headings and their positioning in the first verse.

Very much like the psalms in Book I, those in Book II constitute a self-contained structural unity: a deliberately designed, skillfully assembled corpus exhibiting the typical traits of a numerical composition. Its compositional structure, especially in terms of the number of verselines, is even more conspicuous and lucid than that of Book I.

The following statistics reflect the consciously designed compositional structure of Book II.

Table V: Masoretic verses and divine name count

Psalm	'Author'	Masoretic verses	The name YHWH	Elohim	Other designations
42-43	Korahites	17	1	10	EI 4x
44	Korahites	27	0	4	EI Adonay
45	Korahites	18	0	3	
46	Korahites	12	3	5	Elyon
47	Korahites	10	2	7	Elyon
48	Korahites	15	2	5	-
49	Korahites	21	0	2	-
42-49	Total : 7	120	8	36	

50	Asaph	23	1	7	EI/Elyon/Eloah
51	David	21	0	5	Adonay
52	David	11	0	3	EI 2x
53	David	7	0	6	-
54	David	9	1	4	Adonay
55	David	24	2	5	EI Adonay
56	David	14	1	8	
57	David	12	0	6	EI/Elyon/Adonay
51-57	Total: 7	98	4	37	
58	David	12	1	1	Elim*
59	David	18	3	4	-
60	David	14	0	5	-
61	David	9	0	3	-
62	David	13	0	7	Adonay
63	David	12	0	2	EI
64	David	11	1	3	-
65	David	14	0	2	-
58-65	Total: 8	103	9	25	-
51-65	Total: 15	201	13	62	-
66	No name	20	0	8	Adonay
67	No name	8	0	6	-
68	David	36	3	26	EI 5 Ad6 Shad1 YH2
69	David	37	5	9	Adonay
70	David	6	2	3	-
51-70*	Total Davidic: 18	280 (20x14)	19	100	-
71	No name	24	3	9	Adonay 2x
72:1-19	Solomon	19	1	2	-
42-72:19	Altogether: 30	494 (19x26)	32 + 2 YH = 34	168	

Observations

1. The total number of Masoretic verses in Book II, including the doxology (but excluding the editorial note in 72:20) amount to **494** (19 x **26**). This means that the Masoretes have finalized and sealed the psalms of Book II with a significant number of verses. For this compositional technique, see the [Compositional Structure of the Psalter](#).
2. The **32** occurrences of the name YHWH are relatively few in comparison with the 168 occurrences of Elohim. This has to do with the preference for the use of Elohim in the 7 Korahite psalms and the 18 Davidic psalms (ratio **136** (8x**17**) against 27). What is most remarkable about the use of the Divine name is the fact that, together with the 2 instances of YH, there are exactly **34** (2 x **17**) occurrences (32 + 2). In light of the sealing technique referred to in Observation 1, this can only mean that the psalms of Book I were sealed with 2 x **17** instances of the divine name.
3. The **18** Davidic psalms comprise altogether **280** Masoretic verses (20 x **14**), which may have been intentional to achieve a multiple of **14**, the numerical value of the name David. This supposition is underscored by the fact that there are **140** (10 x **14**) words in the headings of the Davidic psalms – see Table VIII, Observation 2.

Table VI: Verseline- and word-count *excluding* the headings

Psalm	'Author'	Verselines	Word Total	Before atnach	After atnach
42-43	Korahites	17	187	140	47
44	Korahites	28	192*/193	112	80/81
45	Korahites	17	152	94	58
46	Korahites	11	91	50	41
47	Korahites	10	72	44	28
48	Korahites	15	106	69	37
49	Korahites	21	161	100	61
42-49	Korahite psalms: 7	119 (7x17)	961*/962 (37x26)	609	352*/353
50	Asaph	23	175	103	72
51	David	20	153 (9x17)	89	64
52	David	11	88	56	32
53	David	10	77	54	23
54	David	7	49	27	22
55	David	28	187	125	62
56	David	14	109	63	46
57	David	14	103*/104	69	34*/35
51-57	Davidic psalms: 7	104 (4x26)	766*/767	483	283*/284
58	David	11	95	52	43
59	David	19	143	93	50
60	David	12	88	51	37
61	David	8	63	34	29
62	David	16	110	73	37
63	David	12	88	53	35
64	David	10	79	46	33
65	David	16	105	63	42
58-65	Davidic psalms: 8	104 (4x26)	771	465	306 (18x17)
51-65	Davidic psalms: 15	208 (8x26)	1537*/1538	948	589*/590
66	No name	19 +	148	82	66
67	No name	7 = 26	47	24	23
58-67	10 Psalms	130 (5x26)	966	571	395
51-67	17 Psalms	234 (9x26)	1732	1054 (62x17)	678*/679
68	David	36	303	201	102
69	David	38	287	165	122
70	David	8	44	31	13
68-70	Davidic psalms: 3	82	634	327	237
71	No name	25	142	88	54
66-67+71	Nameless psalms: 3	51 (3x17)	337	194	143
72:1-19	Solomon**	22	156 (6x26)	97	59
42-72:19	Altogether: 30	505	3805*/3807	2350	1455*/1457

* Corrected text in Ps. 44:15 and 57:10. See my Analysis of these two psalms.

**The editorial note (72:20), cannot be regarded as a poetic verseline; it is left out of consideration.

Observations

1. The astounding figures in the third column show the number of verselines in each psalm and in groups of psalms. These numbers are very significant indeed – as is also the case in Book I. They demonstrate the paramount importance of the verseline as building block to give structure to sub-groups and groups of the Psalter.
2. The **7** Korahite Psalms have **119** (**7 x 17**) verselines and **962** (**37 x 26**) words.
3. The first sub-group of **7** Davidic psalms (51-57) has **104** (**4 x 26**) verselines. The second group of **8** Davidic psalms (51-57) has **104** (**4 x 26**) verselines. The 3 nameless psalms (66-67, and 71), have altogether **51** (**3 x 17**) verselines.
4. The Asaphite Psalm 50, with its **23** verselines, clearly stands outside this larger corpus and was added at the last stage of the compositional process of Book II.
5. What is significant about the Solomonic Psalm 72 is that it is made up of exactly **22** verselines and **156** (**6 x 26**) words (*including* the doxology!).

Table VII: Word-count including the headings, with/without *selahs*

Psalm	'Author'	Word total	Before atnach	After atnach	Including <i>selahs</i>
42-43	Korahites	191	144	47	-
44	Korahites	196/197*	116	80/81*	197/8*
45	Korahites	160	99	61	-
46	Korahites	97	53	44	100
47	Korahites	76	48	28	77
48	Korahites	110	73	37	111
49	Korahites	165	104	61	167
Total	Korahites	995*/996	637	358*/359	1003*/1004
50	Asaph	177	105	72	178
51	David	153	89	64	-
52	David	88	56	32	90
53	David	77	54	23	-
54	David	61	35	26	62
55	David	191	129	62	193
56	David	120	70	50	-
57	David	103*/ 104	69	34*/35	105*/106
51-57	Davidic psalms: 7	793*/794	502	291*/292	450*/451
58	David	100	57	43	-
59	David	154	100	54	156
60	David	112	69	43	113
61	David	67	38	29	68
62	David	115	78	37	117
63	David	93	55	38	-
64	David	82	49	33	-
65	David	109	67	42	-
58-65	Davidic psalms: 8	832 (32x26)	513	319	454
66	No name	151	85	66	154
67	No name	51	28	23	53
68	David	307	205	102	310
69	David	291	169	122	-
70	David	47	34	13	-
68-70	Davidic psalms: 3	645	408 24x17)	237	310
71	No name	203	122	81	-
66, 67, 71	Nameless: 3	405	235	170	207
72:1-17	Solomon	138	82	56	-
72:1-19	Including doxology	157	98	59	-
42-71	Korah+David+N N	3670*/3672	2295	1375*/1377	3699*/3700
42-72:19	Altogether	4004*/4006	2498	1506*/1508	4034*/4036

* Numbers based on the corrected text in Ps. 44:15 and 57:10. See my Analysis of these two psalms.

There are altogether 30 *selahs*: Korahite psalms (8), Asaphite (1), Davidic (16), nameless psalms (5). The numbers show no significant patterns, neither do they generate additional multiples of divine name numbers than can be expected to be there by chance. Therefore they appear to play no role in the compositional structure of the book.

However, Psalms 42-72 (the corrected text, including the doxology) are made up of **4004** words (154 x **26**), which appears to be significant.

As shown in the second last row in columns 3-5, the Korahite, Davidic and nameless psalms (excluding the *selahs*), taken together, have the following intriguing compositional formula:

$$3672 (216 \times 17) = 2295 (135 \times 17) + 1377 (81 \times 17).$$

This shows once again that Psalm 50 was *inserted* at the final stage of the composition of Book II.

Table VIII: The headings: word-count and their positioning

Psalm	'Author'	No heading	In 1st vs	Separate verse	'Context'
42-43	Korahites			4 words	
44	Korahites			4 words	
45	Korahites			8 words	
46	Korahites			6 words	
47	Korahites			4 words	
48	Korahites			4 words	
49	Korahites			4 words	
42-49	8 Psalms			34 (2x17) words	
50	Asaph		2 words		
51	David			3 words	vs. 2 9 words
52	David			3 words	vs. 2 12 words
53	David			5 words	
54	David			4 words	vs. 2 8 words
55	David			4 words	
56	David			7 words	4 words
57	David			5 words	4 words
58	David			5 words	
59	David			5 words	6 words
60	David			7 words	vs. 2 17 words
61	David			4 words	
62	David			5 words	
63	David			5 words	3 words; cf 145:1b
64	David			3 words	
65	David			4 words	
66	No name		3 words	-	
67	No name			4 words	
68	David			4 words	
69	David			4 words	
70	David			3 words	
71	No name	X		-	
72	Solomon		1 word	-	
Total: 30 psalms	Korah 7 David 18 nameless 3 Asaph 1 Solomon 1	1 psalm	3 psalms 6 words	26 initial verses Korah 34 David 80 Nameless 4 words	In 8 psalms 63 words 4 extra verses

1. A distinctive feature of the Korahite psalms is that their headings appear in separate verses containing altogether exactly **34** (2 x **17**) words. There are altogether **26** psalms in Book II, of which the headings are accommodated in separate Masoretic verses: 30 verses in total, **26** initial verses and 4 extra verses (numbered as v. 2).
2. Only three psalms have the heading *within* the first verse: Psalm 50 (Asaph), Psalm 66 (nameless), and Psalm 72 (Solomon). There are **26** psalms having headings in separate verses and 4 have an extra verse (v. 2). Psalm 71 has no heading.
3. It may prove to be useful that I have registered the words in the 'context' separately, that is to say, the 'historical situation' in connection with the composition of a number of psalms. The 60 extra words in the last column bring the total number of words in the headings of the Davidic psalms up to **140** (10 x **14**). This was probably what the editors deliberately intended, because **14** is the numerical value of the name David. In this way they sealed the Davidic psalms symbolically with his name.
4. Note that there are **68** (4 x **17**) words in the headings of the first group of **7** Davidic Psalms (51-57), **34** (2 x **17**) words in the headings of the Korahite psalms and **7** words in the headings of the nameless psalms.

For the disputed issue of the relationship between the headings and the poetical bodies of the psalms, see the Introduction to [Book I](#), Table IV, Observation 2.

The Compositional Structure of Book II

42-43 44 45 46 47 48 49 (7)

50 Transition psalm

51 52 53 54 55 56 57 (7)

58 59 60 61 62 63 64 (7)

65 66 67 68 69 70 71 (7)

72 Concluding psalm

Book II: First Expansion of the Davidic Psalter: Psalms 42-72

For a full discussion, see the [Compositional Structure of the Psalter](#).

Book II: Select Bibliography

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