

# Psalm 2— Logotechnical Analysis

## Guidelines

- Please read the [General Introduction](#) as well as the Introduction to [Book I](#).
- For common features found in the numerical analysis charts, see the "[Key to the charts](#)".

## Specific features of Psalm 2

- Though Psalm 2 is not ascribed to David, it deals with David's election and his universal kingship (compare Observation 1), serving as the introduction to the First Sub-Group of Seven Davidic Psalms, Psalms 2-8.
- Like its predecessor, Psalm 2 is a masterpiece of numerical composition. The meaningful centre (v. 7) is positioned in the two pivotal cola, which are surrounded by **26** cola: **13 + 2 + 13**. The 28 cola form a perfect concentric pattern: 7 + 6 + 2 + 6 + 7.
- Most impressive is the way in which the divine name numbers are used to give particular importance to the two divine decrees: the speaker uses **34** (2 x 17) words to set the stage for the first decree and **51** (3 x 17) to present the second decree. In addition, the total number of words in the two divine decrees amount to exactly **26**. To crown it all, the speaker uses exactly **26** words to address the rebellious nations!

## Strophic structure - Canto/Stanza boundary: ||

- Van der Lugt: 1-3, 4-6 || 7-9, 10-12 (2 cantos, 4 strophes, 12 verselines and 28 cola).
- Fokkelman and Labuschagne: similarly.
- For an overview of other divisions of the text, see Van der Lugt, CAS, Psalm 2, § 6.

## Logotechnical analysis

- Columns **a** and **b** show the number of words before and after the atnach.
- Column **c**: words of the first person speaker; **d**: words attributed to God.
- The numbering of the verselines is in **brown**.

		<b>Total</b>	<b>a</b>	<b>b</b>	<b>c</b>	<b>d</b>
1	לְמָה רָגַשׁוּ גּוֹיִם <sup>^</sup> 1	3	3		3	
	וּלְאֻמִּים יִהְיוּ דְרִיקִי:	3		3	3	
	Total, v. 1:	6	= 3	+ 3	= 6	+ 0
2	יִתְצַבּוּ מִלְּכֵי אֲרֶץ 2	3	3		3	
	וְרוֹזְנִים נוֹסְדוּ יִחַד <sup>^</sup>	3	3		3	
	עַל-יְהוָה וְעַל-מְשִׁיחוֹ:	4		4	4	
	Total, v. 2:	10	= 6	+ 4	= 10	+ 0
3	נִנְתְּקָה אֶת-מוֹסְרוֹתֵימוֹ <sup>^</sup> 3	3	3		3	
	וְנִשְׁלִיכָה מִמֶּנּוּ עֲבֹתֵימוֹ:	3		3	3	
	Total, v. 3:	6	= 3	+ 3	= 6	+ 0
	<b>Strophe 1</b> Total, v. 1-3:	22	= 12	+ 10	= 22	+ 0

4		יֹשֵׁב בְּשָׁמַיִם יִשְׁחָק־ אֲדֹנָי יִלְעַגְלָמוֹ: Total, v. 4:	4	3	3	3		
				<u>3</u>		<u>3</u>	<u>3</u>	
				6	=	3	+	3
								= 6 + 0
5		אִז יִדְבַר אֱלִימוֹ בְּאִפּוֹ־ וּבְחֲרוֹנוֹ יִבְהַלְמוֹ: Total, v. 5: Total, v. 1-5:	5	4	4	4		
				<u>2</u>		<u>2</u>	<u>2</u>	
				6	=	4	+	2
								= 6 + 0
				<b>34</b>	=	<b>19</b>	+	<b>15</b>
								= <b>34</b> + 0
6	First divine decree	וְאֲנִי נֹסֶכְתִּי מִלְכִּי־ עַל־צִיּוֹן הִרְקַדְשִׁי: 7 words Total, v. 6: Total, v. 1-3:	6	3	3			3
				<u>4</u>		<u>4</u>	<u>4</u>	
				7	=	3	+	4
								= 0 + 7
				<b>22</b>	=	<b>12</b>	+	<b>10</b>
								= 22 + 0
	Strophe 2			<b>19</b>	=	<b>10</b>	+	<b>9</b>
	Canto I							= 12 + 7
				<b>41</b>	=	<b>22</b>	+	<b>19</b>
								= 34 + 7
7*	Middle cola: 28=13+2+13	אֲסַפְּרָה אֶל הַחֵק־ יִתְּנָה אֱמֶרֶת אֱלֹהִים בְּנֵי אֶתְנָה־ Meaningful centre	7	3	3	3		
				<u>5</u>		<u>5</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>2</u>
				3		3		3
				11	=	8	+	3
								= 6 + 5
				2		2		2
				3		3		3
				<u>3</u>		<u>3</u>	<u>3</u>	
				8	=	5	+	3
								= 0 + 8
				3		3		3
				<u>3</u>		<u>3</u>	<u>3</u>	
				6	=	3	+	3
								= 0 + 6
				<b>25</b>	=	<b>16</b>	+	<b>9</b>
								= 6 + 19
10		וְעַתָּה מְלָכִים הַשְּׂכִילוּ־ הַנְּסִרוּ כָּל־שִׁפְטֵי אֶרֶץ־ Total, v. 10:	10	3	3	3		
				<u>4</u>		<u>4</u>	<u>4</u>	
				7	=	3	+	4
								= 7 + 0
11**		עֲבְדוּ אֶת־יְהוָה בִּירְאָה־ נִשְׁקוּ בְּהַגְלִיּוֹ בְּרַעְדָּה־ Total, v. 11:	11	4	4	4		
				<u>3</u>		<u>3</u>	<u>3</u>	
				7	=	4	+	3
								= 7 + 0
12**		פֶּן־יֵאָנֶפֶת וְתֹאבְדוּ דְרָךְ־ כִּי־יִבְעַר כְּמַעַט אִפּוֹ־ Coda אֲשֶׁר־יִכְלֹחֲסֵי בּוֹ: Total, v. 12:	12	4	4	4		
				<u>4</u>		<u>4</u>	<u>4</u>	
				12	=	8	+	4
								= 12 + 0
	Strophe 4			<b>26</b>	=	<b>15</b>	+	<b>11</b>
	Canto II							= 26 + 0
				<b>51</b>	=	<b>31</b>	+	<b>20</b>
								= 32 + 19
				<b>92</b>	=	<b>53</b>	+	<b>39</b>
								= 66 + 26

\* In v. 7, with Christensen, I regard יְהוָה as belonging to the second colon, because of the major disjunctive accent *ole weyored* on the words אֵלֹהִים - as in the Ginsburg Edition and that of Snaith. The change has no logotechnical consequences.

\*\* The text in vs. 11-12 is evidently not in order. Many scholars, including Van der Lugt and Fokkelman, emend MT by transferring נִשְׁקוּ בְּרֵךְ, 'kiss the son', from v. 12 to the end of v.11, which restores the poetic structure (see *BHS* and Van der Lugt's analysis).

However, this emendation does not resolve the problem in regards the problematic words 'kiss the son', containing a highly improbable (Aramaic!) word for 'son'.

The emendation proposed by M. Dahood would be a serious alternative. He does not transfer נִשְׁקוּ בְּרֵךְ to v. 11, but reads the words as נִשְׁקוּ בְּרֵךְ 'O men of the grave'. The emendation has no effect on the word-count, but there is a better solution to the problem of נִשְׁקוּ בְּרֵךְ.

A. Bertholet's proposal (1908), followed by Kittel (1922), Schmidt (1934), Weiser (1950), Kraus (1960) and others, resolves all problems in a most satisfactory way by reading: נִשְׁקוּ בְּרֵגְלָיו בְּרֵעָדָה, 'kiss his feet with trembling'. The colon now has 3 words instead of 4. The loss of one word can be compensated by adding כָּל, 'all', in v. 10b, on the strength of some Hebrew manuscripts and LXX (see *BHS*).

Logotechnically, this emendation causes the 26 words of vs. 10-12 to divide into their basic components 15 (YH) before and 11 (WH) after *atnach*. Compare Observation 5 in my Analysis of [Psalm 1](#), and Observation 4 in that of [Psalm 5](#).

See the chart, where I have highlighted the word-count of the emended text.

Christensen's proposal to add *selah* at the end of v. 2 (with LXX), in my opinion, is not very helpful for a better understanding of the text, because the *selah* falls outside the poetical body of the psalm. Please consult the "Key to the charts" for my view of the headings and other secondary material as not belonging to the authorial but to the editorial stage of the formation of the Psalter.

## Observations

1. In terms of the 92 words of the poem, the arithmetic centre is constituted by the two words אָמַר אֵלַי, 'he said to me', in vs. 7a:  $92 = 45 + 2 + 45$ . The pride of place given to this formula introducing God's words addressed to the king, is a scribal device to stress the paramount importance of the two divine decrees. This is underscored by the fact that the total number of words attributed to God amount to exactly 26 (7 in vs. 6 and 19 in vs. 7-9).

Though the two pivotal words are reasonably meaningful, there is a better candidate in terms of the 28 cola of the poem: the two middle cola in vs. 7a-b, situated in the 7<sup>th</sup> verseline (as in Psalm 1). The meaningful centre is significantly surrounded by 26 cola, with 13 on each side ( $28 = 13 + 2 + 13$ ):

אֲסַפְּרָה אֵל חַק יְהוָה אָמַר אֵלַי בְּנִי אַתָּה

I shall announce a decree // YHWH said to me: 'my son are you'.

The arithmetic centre in terms of words, אָמַר אֵלַי, reinforces its pivotal position. In addition, the middle instance of the three occurrences of the name YHWH also falls within the meaningful centre and highlights its central position in another way. For this particular technique, see the [General Introduction](#) under "The centre of the text", "Special devices to highlight the meaningful centre".

The pivotal position of the two central cola is further underscored by the perfect concentric structure of the text in terms of its 28 cola:  $28 = 7 + 6 + 2 + 6 + 7$ , which is very reminiscent of the concentric structure of Psalm 1.

The numbers **7** and **4** (respectively the number of fullness and the number of universality, representing the four quarters of the earth) play an important role in giving structure to the text: note the **7** words in the first divine decree (vs. 6), the **7** cola of the first and last strophes (vs. 1-3 and 10-12), the **28** (**4 x 7**) cola of the poem, arranged in **4** strophes, and the **92** (**23 x 4**) words. Van der Lugt's tentative suggestion, that this symbolically expresses the *universal rule* of the messianic king (cf. v. 8!), may well, in my opinion, be precisely what the author of the poem intended.

2. The divine name numbers have been used to highlight the two divine decrees.

In Canto I (vs. 1-6), the speaker uses **34** (**2 x 17**) words to set the stage for the first divine decree (v. 6). The **7**-word divine decree is surrounded by exactly **85** (**5 x 17**) words: **34 + 7 + 51**:

וְאֲנִי נִסְכַּתִּי מִלְכֵי־עַל־צִיּוֹן הַר־קֹדֶשׁ

I myself have enthroned my king, on Zion, my holy mountain.

In Canto II (vs. 7-12), the speaker uses altogether **51** words (**3 x 17**) in his address to the kings of the earth, in which he cites the **19**-word second decree (**32 + 19 = 51**).

The number of words in the two divine decrees (column d) amount to **26** (**7 + 19**). Finally, in his address to the kings (vs. 10-12), significantly enough, without any introduction – as in the speeches in vs. 3 and 6 -, the speaker also uses **26** words.

3. The unity of Canto I (vs. 1-6) is underscored by the use of a semi-chiastic numerical pattern, which I call a numerical chiasmus, tying vs. 1-3 and 4-6 together:

vs. 1-3 (Strophe 1) **22** words: **12 + 10**

vs. 4-6 (Strophe 2) **19** words: **10 + 9**

vs. 1-6 together **41** words: **22 + 19**.

See the [General Introduction](#) under "Special patterns", "Numerical chiasmus".

4. The last colon (v. 12c), in my opinion, clearly exhibits the characteristics of a coda. In terms of content, it appears to be a general, concluding statement, standing apart within the last strophe. The keyword אֲשֶׁר־י, 'happy', refers back to Psalm 1 and, at the same time, it precludes Psalm 3, which deals with king David, the messianic king par excellence, who trusts in YHWH and sets an example for all the kings of the earth.
5. The name יהוה occurs 3x (vs. 2c, 7a and 11a), and אֲדֹנָי, 'my Lord', 1x (v. b).

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