

Psalm 4— 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 4

- Psalm 4 is the first among a considerable number of psalms structured by words addressed to God, and words spoken to another party. This has proven to be most helpful to define the rather complicated compositional structure of this psalm.
- The meaningful centre on word level (v. 5b), the reprimand given to the speaker's enemies, coincides precisely with the middle colon, which buttresses its pivotal position.

Strophic structure - Canto/Stanza boundary: ||

- Van der Lugt: 2-3, 4-5 || 6-7, 8-9 (2 cantos and 4 strophes, with 8 verselines and 16 cola, taking vs. 2, 3 and 9 as bicola, disregarding the three *atnachs*).
- Fokkelman: 2, 3-4, 5-6, 7-8, 9 (5 strophes with 8 verselines and 18 cola, taking vs. 2 and 9 as tricola; v. 3, however, he takes as a bicolon, disregarding the *atnach*).
- Labuschagne: 2, 3, 4-5 || 6, 7-9 (2 cantos and 5 strophes, with 8 verselines and 19 cola, taking vs. 2, 3 and 9 as tricola, with due regard for the *atnachs*).
- For an overview of other divisions of the text, see Van der Lugt, CAS, Psalm 4, § 6.

Logotechnical analysis

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

| | | Total | a | b | c | d |
|---|--|-------|------|-----|------|------|
| 1 | לְמִנְצַח בְּנִינֹת מִזְמוֹר לְדָוִד: Heading, v. 1 | 4 | = 4 | + 0 | | |
| 2 | בִּקְרָאֵי עֲנִי אֱלֹהֵי צַדִּיק 1 | 4 | 4 | | 4 | |
| | בַּצֹּר הִרְחַבְתָּ לִּי | 3 | 3 | | 3 | |
| | חַנּוּנִי וְשָׁמַע תְּפִלָּתִי: | 3 | | 3 | 3 | |
| | Strophe 1 Total, v. 2 | 10 | = 7 | + 3 | = 10 | + 0 |
| 3 | בָּנִי אִישׁ עַד־מָה כְּבוֹדִי לְכֹלֶמָּה 2 | 6 | 6 | | | 6 |
| | תֵּאֱהָבוּן רִיקָא | 2 | 2 | | | 2 |
| | תִּבְקְשׁוּ כָּזָב סֶלָה: | 2 | | 2 | | 2 |
| | Strophe 2 Total, v. 3 | 10 | = 8 | + 2 | = 0 | + 10 |
| 4 | וְדַעַנִּי כִּי־הִפְלֵה יְהוָה חֲסִיד לֹא־ 3 | 6 | 6 | | | 6 |
| | יְהוָה יִשְׁמַע בִּקְרָאֵי אֱלֹוֹ: | 4 | | 4 | | 4 |
| | Total, v. 4 | 10 | = 6 | + 4 | = 0 | + 10 |
| 5 | מִדְּלוֹ וְאֶל־תִּחַטְּאוּ 4 | 3 | 3 | | | 3 |
| | אֲמָרוּ בְּלִבְבְּכֶם עַל־מִשְׁפַּכְּכֶם וְדַמּוּ סֶלָה: | 5 | 5 | | | 5 |
| | Middle words: 71 = 33 + 5 + 33 Total, v. 5 | 8 | = 8 | + 0 | = 0 | + 8 |
| | Strophe 3 Total, v. 4-5 | 18 | = 14 | + 4 | = 0 | + 18 |
| | Canto I Total, v. 2-5 | 38 | = 29 | + 9 | = 10 | + 28 |

| | | |
|---|--|--|
| 6 | זָבַחוּ זִבְחֵי-צֶדֶקָה 5 וּבִטְחוּ אֶל-יְהוָה: Strophe 4 Total, v. 6 Total, v. 4-6 Total, v. 3-6 | 3 3 3 <u>3 3 3</u> 6 = 3 + 3 = 0 + 6 <u>24 = 17 + 7 = 0 + 24</u> <u>34 = 25 + 9 = 0 + 34</u> |
| 7 | רַבִּים אֲמָרִים מִי-יִרְאֵנוּ טוֹב 6 נִסָּה-עָלֵינוּ אֹזֶר פְּנִיךָ יְהוָה: Total, v. 7 | 5 5 5 <u>5 5 5</u> 10 = 10 + 0 = 10 + 0 |
| 8 | נִתְתָּה שְׂמֹחָה בְּלִבֶּיךָ 7 מֵעַתָּה דִּגְגָנִים וְתִירוֹשִׁים רַבּוּ: Total, v. 8 Total, v. 7-8 | 3 3 3 <u>4 4 4</u> 7 = 3 + 4 = 7 + 0 <u>17 = 13 + 4 = 17 + 0</u> |
| 9 | בְּשָׁלוֹם יַחְדָּו אֲשַׁכְּבָה וְאִישׁוֹן 8 כִּי-אַתָּה יְהוָה לְבָדְדִי לְבַטַח תּוֹשִׁיבֵנִי: Total, v. 9 Total, v. 8-9 Strophe 5 Total, v. 7-9 Canto II Total, v. 6-9 Total, v. 4-9 Total, v. 2-9 With the heading, v. 1-9 And with the heading (2x), v. 1-9 | 4 4 4 <u>4 4 4</u> <u>10 = 8 + 2 = 10 + 0</u> <u>17 = 11 + 6 = 17 + 0</u> <u>27 = 21 + 6 = 27 + 0</u> <u>33 = 24 + 9 = 27 + 6</u> <u>51 = 38 + 13 = 27 + 34</u> <u>71 = 53 + 18 = 37 + 34</u> <u>75 = 57 + 18</u> <u>77 = 58 + 19</u> |

* I see no cogent reason for emending the text in any way (see *BHS*). On the contrary, the numerical structure strongly resists any emendation whatsoever.

Observations

- In terms of the 71 words of the psalm, the middle word is the preposition **עַל** in v. 5b (35 + 1 + 35), which can hardly qualify as a meaningful centre. Neither do the 3 pivotal words, despite the compositional formula, which happens to be **34 + 3 + 34**:

בְּלִבְבְּכֶם עַל-מִשְׁכְּבֵיכֶם

in your hearts, on your beds.

The 5 words in v. 5b (71 = 33 + 5 + 33) constitute the consciously devised meaningful centre, which coincides precisely with the middle colon (19 = 9 + 1 + 9). In addition, it is demarcated and emphasized by the two imperatives:

אֲמָרוּ בְּלִבְבְּכֶם עַל-מִשְׁכְּבֵיכֶם וְדַמּוּ

Meditate in your hearts, on your beds, and be silent.

This reprimand is a most fitting meaningful centre for a poem in which the honour of the speaker suffers shame because of the mendacious tongues of his adversaries.

The *selah* at the end of v. 5 appears to have the function of highlighting the meaningful centre and marking the boundary between Canto I and Canto II. In much the same way, the *selah* at the end of v. 3 marks the boundary between Strophe 1 and Strophe 2 – compare the function of the *selahs* in Psalm 3.

2. There is no agreement among scholars as regards the poetical structure of the poem. Van der Lugt finds 4 strophes with 8 regular bicolon verselines - ignoring the *atnach* in vs. 2, 3 and 9 – and counts 16 cola. Fokkelman disregards the *atnach* only in v. 3, which he considers a bicolon; taking vs. 2 and 9 as tricola, he finds 18 cola. With due regard for the disjunctive function of the *atnach* in all three verses, I regard them as tricola and find 19 cola.

Since v. 2 (words spoken to God) and v. 3 (words spoken to the adversaries), are so diverse, they cannot constitute a strophe (contra Van der Lugt). With Christensen, I consider v. 3 a separate strophe. The *selah* at the end of v. 3 has a demarcating function, indicating that v. 3 does not belong with v. 4 either (contra Fokkelman, who takes vs. 3-4 as Strophe 2).

3. The division of the words addressed to God (Column c) and the words spoken to the adversaries (Column d), appears to have a strong structuring function. Trying to identify the two categories more precisely, we first have to resolve the problem posed by v. 7: are these 10 words supposed to be addressed to the adversaries or to God? In my judgement, in terms of both content and structure, they are addressed to God.

My interpretation is based on the fact that v. 7 is an unmistakable close-knit unity, characterized by being a 'we'- section. This means that v. 7a cannot be separated from 7b, as proposed by Christensen, who divides the text into 6-7b and 7c-9. Moreover, v. 7 does not belong with v. 6, where the adversaries are addressed, but is an essential part of the prayer in vs. 8-9, where it constitutes the introduction to the final address to God, Strophe 5, vs. 7-9.

In v. 7, the speaker refers to the fact that many people pray to God but have to wait in vain for him to show them good. In his own experience, however, God has done so to him voluntarily and plentifully:

Many people keep saying: "Who will show **us** good?
Lift up over **us** the light of your countenance, O YHWH."
But you have put into my heart more joy
Than they have when their grain and wine abound.

My interpretation of the 10 words of v. 7 as being addressed to God is logotechnically buttressed by the significant division of the text: **37** words spoken to God (Column c) and **34** (2 x **17**) addressed to the adversaries (Column d).

4. The divine name number **17** has been woven into the text in several ways:

| | |
|---------|--|
| vs. 3-6 | 34 (2 x 17) words spoken to the adversaries |
| vs. 4-6 | 17 words before <i>atnach</i> |
| vs. 7-8 | 17 words in total, addressed to God |
| vs. 8-9 | 17 words in total, addressed to God |
| vs. 4-9 | 51 (3 x 17) words in total. |

5. The name יהוה appears 5 times, while the word אֱלֹהִים occurs only in v. 2.

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