

Psalm 16— 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 16

- The alternate use of the 2nd and 3rd person form of address (words directly addressed to God and words spoken about him) determines the strophic structure of the text and weaves the divine name numbers into its fabric.
- The author used the numerical value (49) of five key-words in the text to define the total number of words in vs. 1-6 (Canto I).

Strophic structure - Canto/Stanza boundary: ||

- Van der Lugt: 1-4, 5-6 || 7-8, 9-11 (2 cantos and 4 strophes, with 10 verselines and 23 cola).
- Fokkelman: 1-2, 3-4, 5-6 || 7-9, 10-11 (2 stanzas, 5 strophes with 11 verselines and 24 cola, taking v. 1 as a separate bicolic verseline; like Van der Lugt, he disregards the change in the direction of address in his Strophe 1, vs. 1-2).
- Labuschagne: 1, 2-4, 5-6 || 7-9, 10-11 (2 cantos with 5 strophes, 12 verselines and 23 cola, with due regard for the change in the direction of address).
- For an overview of other divisions of the text, see Van der Lugt, CAS, Psalm 16, § 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 spoken about God.
- The numbering of the verselines is shown in **brown**.

		Total	a	b	c	d
1	מִכְתָּם לְדָוִד ^ Heading	2	2			
	שְׁמֵרֵנִי אֱלֹהֵי חַסְדֵי בְּךָ : Strophe 1 Total, v. 1	1 5	5	0	5	0
		5	= 5	+ 0	= 5	+ 0
2*	אָמַרְתָּ לַיהוָה אֱלֹהֵי אֲתָהּ ^ שׁוֹבְתִי בְּלִעָלְיָהּ : שׁוֹבְתִי = 49 (16+12+10+11) and (9+6+2+22+10) Total, v. 2	2 4	4			4
		3		3		3
		7	= 4	+ 3	= 0	+ 7
3	לְקַדְּוֹשִׁים אֲשֶׁר־בְּאֶרֶץ הַמִּזְחָה ^ וְאֹדִירֵי כָּל־חַפְּצֵי־בָּם : Total, v. 3	3 4	4			4
		4		4		4
		8	= 4	+ 4	= 0	+ 8

4	<p>וַיִּרְבוּ עֲצָבוֹתָם אַחַר מְהָרוּ 4</p> <p>בְּלֹא־אִסִּיד נִסְכֵיהֶם מְדָם־ 4</p> <p>וּבְלֹא־אִשָּׁא אֶת־שְׁמוֹתָם עַל־שִׁפְתָיו: 6</p> <p>Total, v. 4 14 = 8 + 6 = 0 + 14</p> <p>Strophe 2 Total, v. 2-4 29 = 16 + 13 = 0 + 29</p> <p>Total, v. 1-4 34 = 21 + 13 = 5 + 29</p>	4	4	4	4
5	<p>וַיְהִי מִנְת־חֶלְקִי וְכֹסִי־ 6</p> <p>אֶתָּה תֹמְיָךְ גּוֹרְלִי: אֶתָּה תֹמְיָךְ גּוֹרְלִי: 3</p> <p>(8+12+19+10) and (13+14+22) Total, v. 5 7 = 4 + 3 = 7 + 0</p> <p>6* Central colon: חֲבָלִים נִפְלוּ־לִי בְּנַעֲמִים־ 7</p> <p>אַף־נִחַלְתָּ שִׁפְרָה עָלַי: 4</p> <p>23 = 11 + 1 + 11</p> <p>Middle words: 95 = 46 + 3 + 46 Total, v. 6 8 = 4 + 4 = 8 + 0</p> <p>Strophe 3 Total, v. 5-6 15 = 8 + 7 = 15 + 0</p> <p>Total, v. 2-6 44 = 24 + 20 = 15 + 29</p> <p>Canto I Total, v. 1-6 49 = 29 + 20 = 20 + 29</p>	4	4	4	4
7	<p>אַבְרָךְ אֶת־יְהוָה אֲשֶׁר יַעֲצֹנֵי 8</p> <p>אַף־לֵילֹת יִסְרוֹנֵי כְלִיֹּתַי: 4</p> <p>Total, v. 7 9 = 5 + 4 = 0 + 9</p>	5	5	5	5
8	<p>שׁוֹיֹתֵי יְהוָה לְנִגְדֵי תְמִיד־ 9</p> <p>כִּי מִיְמִינִי בְּלֹא־אֲמוּט: 4</p> <p>Total, v. 8 8 = 4 + 4 = 0 + 8</p> <p>Total, v. 7-8 17 = 9 + 8 = 0 + 17</p> <p>Total, v. 5-8 32 = 17 + 15 = 15 + 17</p> <p>Total, v. 1-8 66 = 38 + 28 = 20 + 46</p>	4	4	4	4
9	<p>לָכֵן שָׂמַח לִבִּי וַיִּגַּל כְּבוֹדֵי־ 10</p> <p>אַף־בְּשָׂרֵי יוֹשֵׁן לְבֶטֶח: 4</p> <p>Total, v. 9 9 = 5 + 4 = 0 + 9</p> <p>Strophe 4 Total, v. 7-9 26 = 14 + 12 = 0 + 26</p>	5	5	5	5
10	<p>כִּי לֹא־תַעֲזֹב נַפְשִׁי לְשֹׂאֵל־ 11</p> <p>לֹא־תִתֵּן חֲסִידְךָ לְרֵאוֹת שָׁחַת: 5</p> <p>Total, v. 10 10 = 5 + 5 = 10 + 0</p> <p>Total, v. 7-10 36 = 19 + 17 = 10 + 26</p> <p>Total, v. 5-10 51 = 27 + 24 = 25 + 26</p>	5	5	5	5

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	תודיעני ארח תיים	12	3	3	3
	שבע שמחות את־פניך^		4	4	4
	נעמות בימיך נצח:		3	3	3
	Total, v. 11		10	= 7 + 3	= 10 + 0
Strophe 5	Total, v. 10-11		20	= 12 + 8	= 20 + 0
	Total, v. 9-11		29	= 17 + 12	= 20 + 9
Canto II	Total, v. 7-11		46	= 26 + 20	= 20 + 26
	Total, v. 5-11		61	= 34 + 27	= 35 + 26
	Total, v. 1-11		95	= 55 + 40	= 40 + 55
	With heading, v. 1-11		97	= 52 + 45	

* Note that there are two words written defectively in vs. 2a and 6b, missing the *yodh* of the 1st person form, about which there cannot be any doubt. For what it is worth, I counted the letters in the poem, as I did in Psalm 15, and found that if we restore the two missing *yodhs*, the total number of letters amount to **364** (14 x 26). Compare Observation 5 in my Analysis of [Psalm 15](#)!

Observations

- In terms of the 95 words of the poem, the arithmetic centre is constituted by the last 3 words in v. 6b (95 = 46 + 3 + 46). These words may be regarded as meaningful, but a better candidate for 'meaningful centre' is to be found on colon level: the middle colon, the entire v. 6b (23 = 11 + 1 + 11 cola):

אֲרֵ-נִחַלְתִּי שְׁפָרָה עָלַי

Yes, I am well content with my inheritance.

This statement is a most appropriate expression of the quintessence of a poem in which the speaker regards God as his allotted portion and God's presence as the fullness of satisfaction and joy during his lifetime.

- A striking feature of the poem is the alternate use of words addressed to God and words spoken about him. The 5 words in v. 1 are clearly addressed to God, but in vs. 2-4 we have a different situation. Here, it is difficult to imagine the speaker using the phrase 'I say to YHWH' in a prayer; therefore, I regard the 29 words in vs. 2-4 as spoken *about* God (Column d), i.e., including the words *quoted* by the speaker as earlier addressed to God. As in vs. 1, the words in vs. 5-6, and 10-11 are clearly addressed to God (Col. c). The change in the direction of address causes four caesurae in the text that cannot, in my opinion, be disregarded. They lead to the following strophic structure:

Strophe 1, v. 1	words addressed to God	5 words
Strophe 2, vs. 2-4	words spoken about God	29 words
Strophe 3, vs. 5-6	words addressed to God	15 words
Strophe 4, vs. 7-9	words spoken about God	26 words
Strophe 5, vs. 10-11	words addressed to God	20 words.

- The compositional formula based on the direction of address, 95 = 40 + 55, corresponds conversely with the formula based on the division by *atnach*, 95 = 55a + 40b. The emerging chiasitic pattern is, to say the least, most impressive.

vs. 1-6	49 = 29a + 20b // 20c + 29d
vs. 5-8	32 = 17a + 15b // 15c + 17d
vs. 7-11	46 = 26a + 20b // 20c + 26d
vs. 1-11	95 = 55a + 40b // 40c + 55d

4. Apart from the striking correspondence in the reverse between the compositional formulas of the vs. 5-8 and 7-11, there is also a numerical chiasmus in both sections:

$$\begin{array}{ll} \text{vs. 5-6} & 15 = 8a + 7b & \text{vs. 7-9} & 26 = 14a + 12b \\ \text{vs. 7-8} & 17 = 9a + 8b & \text{vs. 10-11} & 20 = 12a + 8b \\ \text{vs. 5-8} & 32 = 17a + 15b & \text{vs. 7-11} & 46 = 26a + 20b. \end{array}$$

5. The divine name numbers are woven into the fabric of the text in the following way:

vs. 1-4	34 (2 x 17) words in total
vs. 5-8	17 words before atnach
vs. 7-8	17 words spoken about God
vs. 7-9	26 words spoken about God
vs. 8-10	17 words spoken about God
vs. 5-10	51 (3 x 17) words in total, with 26 spoken about God
vs. 7-11	26 words before atnach
vs. 5-11	34 (2 x 17) words before atnach

The inclusion of the 2-word heading in the word-count generates the following additional multiples of the divine name numbers:

vs. 1-6	51 (3 x 17) words in total
vs. 1-8	68 (4 x 17) words in total
vs. 1-11	52 (2 x 26) words before <i>atnach</i> .

For the status of the headings, see Observations 1 and 4 in my Analysis of Psalm 3.

6. The *kabod* number **23** in the **46** (2 x **23**) words of Canto II may have been consciously designed to symbolize the presence of God, which is a very important issue in the poem.

We are on firmer ground when we regard the choice for **49** words in vs. 1-6 as dictated by the fact that no less than five keywords have the numerical value of **49**. These words are שׁוֹבְתִי, 'my good', and עֲלֵיךְ, 'for me' (v. 2b), מְנַת, 'portion', and חֶלְקִי, 'my share' (v. 5a), and תָּמִיד, 'always' (v. 8a) – see the chart. Consult the General Introduction under "The numerical value of a keyword in the text".

7. The four words of v. 8a, שְׁוִיתִי יְהוָה לְנִגְדֵי תָּמִיד, "I have set YHWH before me always," are to be found on so-called Shivviti plaques hung on the walls of many Jewish homes and placed in front of the chazzan's desk in the synagogue. Many other words from Scripture and motifs such as the Menorah, the Star of David and lions, are interwoven with these words. The tetragrammaton usually occupies a prominent place. The function of this type of decorative plaque is to help people to keep God always before one's mind. For an example, see the article "Shivviti" in Alan Unterman, *Dictionary of Jewish Lore & Legend*, London: Thames and Hudson, 1997. The Shivviti plaque may be combined with the Mizrach plaque which indicates the direction of Jerusalem. The latter plaque contains the 7 words of Psalm 113:3 – see Observation 5 in my Analysis of [Psalm 113](#).
8. The name יהוה occurs 4 times (2a, 5a, 7a, 8a), אֱל once (1a) and אֱדֹנָי once (2a).

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