

Psalm 29— 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 feature of Psalm 29

- Psalm 29 concludes the First Sub-group of Eleven Psalms in Book I (Psalms 19-29). It shares several distinctive traits with Psalm 19 at the beginning and with Psalm 24 at the centre of this coherent sub-group. Their leading theme is YHWH's universal presence.
- The psalm is one of the most impressive showpieces of numerical compositional art. The author used different structuring devices, such as the framing technique and the concatenation of holy numbers to highlight the core of the poem, vs. 3-9, dealing with the creative power of God's voice. Additionally, the structure of the text reflects the way the voice of YHWH is enveloped in the universe. In this respect the poem is strongly reminiscent of Psalm 8, the tailpiece of the Sub-group of Seven Davidic Psalms (2-8).
- As in many psalms, but notably in Psalm 28, the numerical value of an important keyword (in this case, **כְּבוֹד**, 'glory') has been used in Psalm 29 as a structuring device.

Strophic structure - Canto/Stanza boundary: ||

- Van der Lugt and Labuschagne: 1-2 || 3-4, 5-6, 7-9 || 10-11 (3 cantos with 5 strophes, 10 verselines and **23** cola, taking vs. 7-9 as two tricolonic verselines).
- Fokkelman: 1-2, 3-4, 5-7, 8-9, 10-11 (5 strophes and 23 cola, but he finds 12 verselines, because he regards v. 7 and 9c as independent (monocolonic) verselines).
- For an overview of other divisions of the text, see Van der Lugt, CAS, Psalm 29, § 6.

Logotechnical analysis

- Columns **a** and **b** show the number of words before and after the atnach.
- Column **c**: words in the framework; **d**: words in the core devoted to YHWH's voice.
- The numbering of the verselines is shown in **brown**.

| | | Total | a | b | c | d |
|----------|--|-----------|----------|-----|-------------|---|
| 1 | מְזִמּוֹר לְדָוִד Heading | <u>2</u> | <u>2</u> | | | |
| | הָבֹו לַיהוָה בְּנִי אֱלִיםִּי 1 | 4 | 4 | | 4 | |
| | הָבֹו לַיהוָה כְּבוֹד וְעֹז: כְּבוֹד = 32 | 4 | | 4 | 4 | |
| | (20 + 2 + 6 + 4 = 32) Total, v.1 | <u>8</u> | = 4 + | 4 = | 8 + | 0 |
| 2 | הָבֹו לַיהוָה כְּבוֹד שְׁמוֹה 2 | 4 | 4 | | 4 | |
| | הַשְׁתַּחֲוִי לַיהוָה בְּהַרְרֵת־קָדֶשׁ: | 4 | | 4 | 4 | |
| | Total, v. 2 | <u>8</u> | = 4 + | 4 = | 8 + | 0 |
| | Canto I Strophe 1 Framework, v. 1-2 | 16 | = 8 + | 8 = | 16 + | 0 |

| | | | | | |
|-----|---|----|----|----|----|
| 3 | קול יְהוָה על־הַמָּיִם אל־הַכְּבוֹד הַרְעִים יְהוָה על־מַיִם רַבִּים: | 3 | 4 | 4 | 4 |
| | Total, v. 3 | | 3 | 3 | 3 |
| 4 | קול־יְהוָה בַּפֶּה קול־יְהוָה בַּהֲרָר: | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 |
| | Total, v. 4 | | 3 | 3 | 3 |
| | Strophe 2 Total, v. 3-4 | | 6 | 6 | 6 |
| | | | 17 | 17 | 17 |
| 5 | קול־יְהוָה שֹׁבֵר אֲרָזִים וַיִּשְׁבֵּר יְהוָה אֶת־אֲרָזֵי הַלְּבָנוֹן: | 5 | 4 | 4 | 4 |
| | Total, v. 5 | | 5 | 5 | 5 |
| | Total, v. 3-5 | | 9 | 9 | 9 |
| 6 | Middle word: 89=44+1+44 וַיִּרְקְדוּ כַּמֹּדֵעַ לְבָנוֹן וַיִּשְׁרִין כַּמֹּדֵעַ בְּרֵאשִׁיִּם: | 6 | 3 | 3 | 3 |
| | Middle colon: 23 = 11 + 1 + 11 Vs. 5-6 middle verselines/strophe Strophe 3 (middle) Total, v. 5-6 Numerical Chiasmus, v. 3-6 | | 5 | 5 | 5 |
| | | | 8 | 8 | 8 |
| | | | 17 | 17 | 17 |
| | | | 17 | 17 | 17 |
| | | | 34 | 34 | 34 |
| 7 * | קול־יְהוָה חֲצַב לְהַבֹּת אֵשׁ (:) | 7 | 5 | 5 | 5 |
| 8 * | קול־יְהוָה יִחִיל מִדְּבָר יִחִיל יְהוָה מִדְּבַר קָדֵשׁ: | 8 | 4 | 4 | 4 |
| | Total, v. 7-8 | | 4 | 4 | 4 |
| | Total, v. 6-7 | | 13 | 13 | 13 |
| | | | 13 | 13 | 13 |
| 9 | קול־יְהוָה יְחַלֵּל אֵילֹת וַיִּחַשֵּׁפַ יַעֲרוֹת וּבְהִיכָלוֹ כָּלוּ אִמֵּר כְּבוֹד: כְּבוֹד = 23 (11 + 2 + 6 + 4 = 23) | 9 | 4 | 4 | 4 |
| | Total, v. 9 | | 3 | 3 | 3 |
| | Strophe 4 Total, v. 7-9 | | 10 | 10 | 10 |
| | Canto II Core of the poem, v. 3-9 | | 23 | 23 | 23 |
| | | | 57 | 57 | 57 |
| 10 | יְהוָה לַמְּבוּל יִשָּׁבֵעַ וַיִּשָּׁבֵעַ יְהוָה מִלֶּקֶד לְעוֹלָם: | 10 | 3 | 3 | 3 |
| | Total, v. 10 | | 4 | 4 | 4 |
| | | | 7 | 7 | 7 |
| 11 | יְהוָה עֵז לְעַמּוֹ יִתֵּן יְהוָה יִבְרַךְ אֶת־עַמּוֹ בְּשָׁלוֹם: | 11 | 4 | 4 | 4 |
| | Total, v. 11 | | 5 | 5 | 5 |
| | | | 9 | 9 | 9 |
| | Canto III Strophe 5 Framework, v. 10-11 | | 16 | 16 | 16 |
| | Total, v. 7-11 | | 39 | 39 | 39 |
| | Total, v. 1-2+10-11 | | 32 | 32 | 32 |
| | Total, v. 1-11 | | 89 | 89 | 89 |
| | With the heading, v. 1-11 | | 91 | 91 | 91 |

* I take (with Van der Lugt, CAS, Psalm 29, § 6), vss. 7-8 as one tricollic verseline.

Observations

- The core of the poem, vs. 3-9, with its 57 words describing the power and glory of the voice of YHWH, is flanked by 16 words on either side:

| | | | | |
|-----------|-----------------------|-----------|-----------|------|
| vs. 1-2 | Canto I Strophe 1 | Framework | 16 words | } 32 |
| vs. 3-9 | Canto II Strophes 2-4 | The core | 57 words | |
| vs. 10-11 | Canto III Strophe 5 | Framework | 16 words. | |

These 32 words of the framework represent the numerical value of the keyword **כְּבוֹד**, 'glory', according to the *decimal* value of the letters: $20 + 2 + 6 + 4 = 32$.*

The framework deals specifically with the *presence* of YHWH in the universe, and the envelope-structure $16 + 57 + 16$ appears to have been chosen consciously to express symbolically the idea that YHWH's voice is enveloped in his universal glory. Note also that YHWH is called **אֱלֹהֵי-הַכְּבוֹד**, 'the God of glory', in v.3b, and that the very last word of the core is the powerful exclamation in v. 9c: **כָּלֹּאִי אָמַר כְּבוֹד**, 'Everyone says: "Glory!"'

The fact that **כְּבוֹד**, 'glory', occurs exactly 4 times (vs. 1, 2a, 3a and 9b) may have been purposefully intended by the author to refer symbolically to the 4 quarters of the earth. Likewise, the 10 occurrences of the divine name in the core were almost certainly designed to refer to the 10 divine speech formulas in connection with the creation of the world in Genesis 1. This is corroborated by the 7 instances of **קוֹל**, 'voice', in the core, which were obviously chosen to signify the 7 days of creation.

The 23 words in vs. 7-9, and the 23 words before atnach in vs. 7-11, represent the *positional* value, of the four letters of **כְּבוֹד**: $11 + 2 + 6 + 4 = 23$.

- At the arithmetic centre of the poem, we find the word **עֵגֶל**, 'calf' ($89 = 44 + 1 + 44$) in v. 6a. Note that **עֵגֶל** is situated within the central colon ($23 \text{ cola} = 11 + 1 + 11$), which falls within the middle of the five 2-line strophes (1-2, 3-4, 5-6, 7-9, 10-11):

וַיַּרְקִידֵם כְּמוֹ-עֵגֶל He makes them skip like a calf.

These three words can hardly be regarded as the meaningful centre of the poem, since the focal point of interest is the entire core, vs. 3-9, surrounded by 32 words.

The typical pattern of a framework enveloping the core is strongly underscored by the skilful symmetrical arrangement of the 18 occurrences of the name **יהוה**: 4x in the first part of the framework, 10x in the core, and 4x in the concluding part of the framework. Additionally, the 7 occurrences of **קוֹל יְהוָה** effectively emphasize the heart of the poem. Here is an outline of the intriguing logotechnical structure:

| | | | | |
|-----------------------|----------|---------------------|-------|------|
| vs. 1-2 | 16 words | 4 times יהוה | } 10x | } 7x |
| vs. 3-6a | 28 words | 6 times יהוה | | |
| עֵגֶל in v. 6a | 1 word | | | |
| vs. 6b-9 | 28 words | 4 times יהוה | | |
| vs. 10-11 | 16 words | 4 times יהוה | | |

* For the computation of the *decimal* and *positional* value of a word, see the [General Introduction](#), p. 5.

It is important to note that the arithmetic centre of the poem, in v. 6a, coincides precisely with that of the core (28 + 1 + 28), with **28 (4 x 7)** words on either side demonstrating the use of the structuring numbers **4** and **7** also on word level.

3. From a logotechnical point of view, vs. 3-7 are built up in such a way that the divine name numbers **17** and **26**, as well as the number **39**, feature prominently. The number **39** explicitly constitutes the YHWH-*echad* formula, **39 = 26 + 13**, since vs. 3-5 have **26** words and vs. 6-7 follow with **13**. In my view, there is no reason to doubt that it was the deliberate intention of the author to use number symbolism to underscore his conviction that the glory of God's name in the universe attests his uniqueness.
4. Another striking feature of the poem is that the author used the concatenation device to weave the divine name numbers into the text and to achieve the YHWH-*echad* formula. He started with **17** words in vs. 3-4 and used precisely **9** in v. 5 to achieve **26**, and then precisely **8** in v. 6 to achieve **34**, and finally precisely **5** in v. 7 to achieve **39** in vs. 3-7. For the first instance of this intriguing device, see Observation 3 in my Analysis of [Psalm 5](#).

The following chart illustrates the concatenation of the numbers 17, 26, 34 and 39:

| | |
|---------|--------------------|
| vs. 3-4 | 17 words |
| v. 5 | + <u>9</u> words |
| vs. 3-5 | = 26 words |
| v. 6 | + <u>8</u> words |
| vs. 3-6 | = 34 words |
| v. 7 | + <u>5</u> words |
| vs. 3-7 | = 39 words. |

Note also that the **34** words of vs. 3-6 form a perfect numerical chiasmus (**17a + 17b**, with **17** words in vs. 3-4 and **17** in vs. 5-6) – see the chart.

5. The name יהוה features no less than 18 times. Other high frequencies of the divine name are to be found in Psalms 27 and 30-35. Consult Observation 4 in my Analysis of [Psalm 30](#).

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