

Psalm 45— Logotechnical Analysis

Guidelines

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

Specific features of Psalm 45

- A defining characteristic of Psalm 45 is the skilful use of the direction of address to give structure to the psalm: of the **153** (9 x 17) words, **119** (7 x 17) are specifically addressed to the king and his bride and **34** (2 x 17) spoken *about* them.
- As in Psalm 44, the meaningful centre is to be found in terms of the poetic structure: the central verseline, v. 10 (17 = 8 + 1 + 8).

Strophic structure - Canto/Stanza boundary: ||

- Van der Lugt: 2-3, 4-6 | 7-8, 9-10 || 11-12, 13-14, 15-16, 17-18 (2 cantos with 8 strophes, 17 verselines and 39 cola).
- Fokkelman: 2-3, 4-6, 7-8, 9-10 || 11-13, 14-16, 17-18 (2 parts with 7 strophes, 17 verselines and 41 cola, taking vs. 6 and 11 as tricola).
- Labuschagne: 2-3, 4-6, 7-8, 9-10 || 11-13, 14-16, 17-18 (2 cantos with 7 strophes determined by the direction of address, 17 verselines and 40 cola, taking v. 6 as a tricolon on account of the *atnach*, which Van der Lugt disregards).

Logotechnical analysis

- Columns **a** and **b** show the number of words before and after the *atnach*.
- Column **c**: words specifically addressed to the couple; **d**: words spoken about them.
- The verselines, 1-17, coincide with the Masoretic verses 2-18.

		Total	a	b	c	d
1	לְמִנְצַחַּ עַל־שְׁנַיִם לְבָנֵי־קָרַח [^]	5	5			
	מְשָׁבִיל שִׁיר יְדִידָת׃	3		3		
	Heading, v. 1	8	= 5	+ 3		
2	Introduction: רָחַשׁ לְבִי דְבַר טוֹב	4	4			4
	spoken about the king אָמַר אָנִי מַעֲשֵׂי לְמַלְכָּה [^]	4	4			4
	לְשׁוֹנִי יַעַט סוֹפֵר מְהִיר׃	4		4		4
	Total, v. 2	12	= 8	+ 4	= 0	+ 12
3*	יְפוּ יַפִּית׃ יְפִיפִית׃ מִבְּנֵי אָדָם	4	3/4		3/4	
	הוֹצֵק חֵן בְּשִׁפְתוֹתֶיהָ [^]	3	3		3	
	עַל־כֵּן בֵּרַכְהָ אֱלֹהִים לְעוֹלָם׃	5		5	5	
	Total, v. 3	11/12	= 6/7	+ 5	= 11/12	+ 0
	Strophe 1 Total, v. 2-3	23/24	= 14/15	+ 9	= 23/24	0

4	תגור־תרֶבֶה על־יֶרֶךְ גְבוּרָה הוֹדֶה וְהִדְרֶה: Total, v. 4	5 5 5 2 2 2 7 = 5 + 2 = 7 + 0
5	וְהִדְרֶה צָלַח רֶכֶב עַל־דְּבַר־אֲמֶת וְעִנּוּה־צָדִיק וְתוֹרָה נוֹרְאוֹת יְמִינָה: Total, v. 5	3 3 3 5 5 5 3 3 3 11 = 8 + 3 = 11 + 0
6	חֲצִיף שְׁנוּנִים עַמִּים תַּחְתִּיף יַפְלוּ בְּלֵב אוֹיְבֵי תַּמְלִיךְ : Total, v. 6	2 2 2 3 3 3 3 3 3 8 = 5 + 3 = 8 + 0
Strophe 2 Total, v. 4-6		26 = 18 + 8 = 26 + 0
7	כִּסְאָה אֱלֹהִים עוֹלָם וְעַד שֶׁבֶט מִיֶּשֶׁר שֶׁבֶט מַלְכוּתָה: Total, v. 7	4 4 4 4 4 4 8 = 4 + 4 = 8 + 0
Total, v. 4-7		34 = 22 + 12 = 34 + 0
Total, v. 3-7		46 = 29 + 17 = 46 + 0
8	אֶחָבֶת צָדִיק וְתִשְׁנֵא רִשְׁעַ עַל־כֵּן מִשְׁחָה אֱלֹהִים אֱלֹהֶיךָ שָׁמַן שֶׁשׁוֹן מִחֲבָרֶיךָ: Total, v. 8	4 4 4 5 5 5 3 3 3 12 = 12 + 0 = 12 + 0
Strophe 3 Total, v. 7-8		20 = 16 + 4 = 20 + 0
Total, v. 4-8		46 = 38 + 12 = 46 + 0
9	מִרְוַאֲחֵלוֹת קִצִּיעוֹת כָּל־בְּגֵדֶיךָ Middle words: מִן־הֵיכְלֵי שֵׁן מִנֵּי שְׁמֹחֶה: 153 = 75 + 3 + 75 Total, v. 9	5 5 5 5 5 5 10 = 5 + 5 = 10 + 0
10	בְּנֹת מַלְכִּים בִּיקְרוּתֶיךָ נִצְבָּה שֶׁגַל לִימִינֶה בְּכַתֶּם אוֹפִיר: 17=8+1+8 Meaningful centre, middle strophe: Total, v. 10	3 3 3 5 5 5 8 = 3 + 5 = 8 + 0
Middle Strophe 4 Total, v. 9-10		18 = 8 + 10 = 18 + 0
Canto I Total, v. 2-10		87/88 = 56/57 + 31 = 75/76 + 12
11	שְׁמַע־בַּת וְרֵאֵי וְהִטִּי אֲזִנִּי וְשִׁכְחֵי עַמִּי וּבֵית אָבִי: Total, v. 11	5 5 5 4 4 4 9 = 5 + 4 = 9 + 0
12	וְיִתְאוּ תַּמְלִיךְ וּפְיֹדָה כִּי־הוּא אֲדַנִּי וְהִשְׁתַּחֲוִי־לוֹ: Total, v. 12	3 3 3 5 5 5 8 = 3 + 5 = 8 + 0
Total, v. 11-12		17 = 9 + 8 = 17 + 0
13	וּבַת־צֹר בְּמִנְחָה פָּנֵי יַחֲלוּ עֲשִׂירֵי עָם: Total, v. 13	5 5 5 2 2 2 7 = 7 + 0 = 7 + 0
Strophe 5 Total, v. 11-13		24 = 15 + 9 = 24 + 0
Total, v. 3-13		99/100 = 63/64 + 36 = 99/100 + 0

14	כָּל־כְּבוֹדָהּ בַּת־מֶלֶךְ פְּנִימָהּ מִמְשָׁבְצוֹת זָהָב לְבוֹשָׁה: Total, v. 14	5 5 5 3 3 3 8 = 5 + 3 = 0 + 8
15	לְרִקְמוֹת תּוֹבֵל לְמֶלֶךְ בַּתּוֹלוֹת אַחֲרֶיהָ רְעוּתֶיהָ מוֹבָאוֹת לָאֵל: Total, v. 15	3 3 3 3 3 3 2 2 2 8 = 6 + 2 = 0 + 8
16	תּוֹבֵלָנָה בְּשִׁמְחָת וְגִיל תְּבֹאֵינָה בְּהִיכָל מֶלֶךְ: Total, v. 16	3 3 3 3 3 3 6 = 3 + 3 = 0 + 6
Vs. 14-16 spoken Strophe 6 Total, v. 14-16		22 = 14 + 8 = 0 + 22
about the bride in the palace Total, v. 11-16		46 = 29 + 17 = 24 + 22
Total, v. 3-16		121/122 = 77/78 + 44 = 99/100 + 22
17	תַּחַת אֲבֹתֶיהָ יָהוּי בְּנִיָּהּ תִּשְׁתַּמְּנוּ לְשָׁרִים בְּכָל־הָאָרֶץ: Total, v. 17	4 4 4 4 4 4 8 = 4 + 4 = 8 + 0
18	אֲזַכִּירָה שְׁמֶךָ בְּכָל־דֶּר וְדָר עַל־כֵּן עַמִּים יִהְיוּדָךְ לְעֵלָם וָעַד: Total, v. 18	5 5 5 6 6 6 11 = 5 + 6 = 11 + 0
Strophe 7 Total, v. 17-18		19 = 9 + 10 = 19 + 0
Canto II Total, v. 11-18		65 = 38 + 27 = 43 + 22
Total, v. 2-18		152/153 = 94/95 + 58 = 118/119 + 34
With the heading, v. 1-18		160/161 = 99/100 + 61

- In v. 3a: I read two words, יָפּוֹ יָפִיתְךָ, 'very beautiful are you' (see BHS), instead of the the one word in MT, יָפִיפִיתְךָ, 'you are the fairest'. In the emended text, the total number of words amount to **153** (9 x 17), with **119** (7 x 17) directly addressed to the king and his bride, and **34** (2 x 17) spoken about them. This most intriguing compositional formula lends credibility to the emendation.

Following Kittel, Schmidt and Kraus, Van der Lugt rearranges vs. 4-5, regarding וְהִדְרֶךָ in v. 5a as dittography and צִלָּח רַכֵּב in v. 5a as part of v. 4b. Deleting וְהִדְרֶךָ and reading יָפִיפִיתְךָ in v. 3a as one word, he counts 151 words instead of 153.

Observations

- The middle three words in v. 9b, מִן־הִיכָלֵי שָׁן, 'from ivory palaces' (75 + 3 + 75), do not qualify as the consciously designed meaningful centre, because they are not particularly meaningful. A far better candidate is to be found, as in Psalm 44, in terms of the poetic structure: the middle verseline, v. 10 (17 = 8 + 1 + 8), or better stil, the middle strophe, vs. 9-10 (7 = 3 + 1 + 3)

מִרְ־נֹאֲהָלוֹת קְצִיעוֹת כָּל־בְּגָדֶיךָ ^ מִן־הִיכָלֵי שָׁן מִנִּי שִׁמְחָתְךָ:
בָּנוֹת מְלָכִים בְּיָקְרוֹתֶיךָ ^ נֹצֵבָה שָׁגֵל לִימִינְךָ בְּכֶתֶם אוֹפִיר:

Your robes are all fragrant with myrrh and aloes and cassia //
From ivory palaces stringed instruments make you glad.
Daughters of kings are among your ladies of honour //
At your right hand stands the queen in gold of Ophir.

These words addressed to the king about his harem and his wedding day, with his bride at his right hand, are an eloquent expression of what the poem is all about, rendering them a most appropriate meaningful centre.

2. After the introduction (v. 2), which is naturally spoken to the king, the author addresses *him* more specifically (vs. 3-10). After the central verseline, however, he suddenly addresses *the bride* (v. 11). The abruptness of the address directed to her, without any introductory formula, is obviously a rhetorical device to cause surprise.

In vs. 11-16 the poet is primarily concerned with *the royal bride*. In this section we find other elements of surprise. Having addressed the bride directly in vs. 11-13, the speaker suddenly switches to 3rd person form in vs. 14-16. Another surprise is that she is once again addressed directly in v. 15c: 'to you' (לָךְ). In my view, there is no need to read לָהּ, 'to her', for the abrupt switch is clearly an attention drawing device.

The MT reading can be explained as the obvious desire to achieve 7 instances of the suffix ת- (as e.g., in Psalm 8!), to match the 7 occurrences of the word מְלֶכֶת. Note that the middle occurrence of the suffix, יְפִיךָ, 'your beauty', is positioned next to the middle instance of the 7 occurrences of מְלֶכֶת (v.12a)! This is obviously to emphasize the bride's beauty desired by the king, which is what this section is all about!

In vs. 17-18 the poem is concluded by the second part of the address to *the king*.

Therefore, we have to conclude that the strophic structure of the poem is fundamentally determined by the direction of address. The introduction (v. 2), though spoken about the king, is addressed to him and structurally integral to Strophe 1:

Strophe 1 vs. 2-3	spoken to the king about his beauty	24 w.
Strophe 2 vs. 4-6	spoken to the king about his weapons	26 w.
Strophe 3 vs. 7-8	spoken to the king about his high status	20 w.
Strophe 4 vs. 9-10	spoken to the king about his wedding day	18 w.
Strophe 5 vs. 11-13	spoken to the bride, welcoming her	24 w.
Strophe 6 vs. 14-16	spoken about the bride in the palace	22 w.
Strophe 7 vs. 17-18	spoken to the king about his future dynasty	19 w.

Significantly, the words in v. 2 and in Strophe 6 spoken about the king and his bride (Column d) amount to 34 (2 x 17) and the words specifically addressed to them (Column c) amount to 119 (7 x 17) giving a total of 153 (9 x 17 and the sum of the numbers 1-17).

3. The divine name numbers feature in the following instances:

vs. 4-6	26 words in total
vs. 4-7	34 (2 x 17) words in total
vs. 3-7	17 words after atnach
vs. 11-12	17 words in total
vs. 11-16	17 words after atnach
vs. 3-16	78 (3 x 26) words before atnach
vs. 2-18	17 Masoretic verses coinciding with the 17 verselines
vs. 2-18	153 (9 x 17) words in total
vs. 2-18	119 (7 x 17) words addressed to the royal couple, and 34 (2 x 17) spoken about them.

4. As in Psalm 44, the name YHWH is absent; אֱלֹהִים occurs 4 times: 3c, 7a, 8b (2x).

© 2008

Dr. C.J. Labuschagne Senior Lecturer in Semitic Languages (retired),
Brinkhorst 44 University of Pretoria, South Africa
9751 AT Haren (Gron) and
The Netherlands Professor of Old Testament (retired),
labuschagne.cj@planet.nl University of Groningen, The Netherlands