

Psalm 48— 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 48

- The psalm has a lucid tripartite canto structure, which is determined by the words spoken *about* God and the words directly addressed to him, and strongly underscored by a regular numerical framework.
- A defining characteristic of Psalm 48 is the use of the numerical value of two keywords to buttress the canto structure. The first keyword is צִיּוֹן, 'Zion', 48, which envelops the central core of the poem, Canto II (vs. 5-12), with 24 words on either side. The psalm shares the choice for 48 words as a structuring device with Psalm 87, the other Korahite Zion-psalm, and with Psalms 122 and 126, also two Zion-psalms.
The second keyword is יְמִינְךָ, 'your right hand', whose numerical value, 58, defines the number of words in the central core, Canto II.

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

- Van der Lugt: 2-4, 5-7 || 8-9, 10-12 || 13-15 (3 cantos, 5 strophes, 15 verselines, 35 cola)
- Fokkelman: 2-3a, 3b-4 || 5-6, 7-8 || 9 || 10-11b, 11c-12 || 13-14b, 14c-15 (5 stanzas, 9 strophes, 19 verselines and 37 cola).
- Labuschagne: 2-4 || 5-7 | 8, 9 | 10-12 || 13-14, 15 (3 cantos - of which the middle canto divides into 3 canticles - 7 strophes, 15 verselines and 35 cola).

Logotechnical analysis

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

		Total	a	b	c	d
1	שִׁיר מְזֻמֹּר לְבְנֵי־קִרְחָה: Heading, v. 1	4 = 4 + 0				
2	גְּדוֹל יְהוָה וּמַהֲלָל מְאֹד־ ¹ בְּעִיר אֱלֹהֵינוּ הִרְקָדְשׁוּ: Total, v. 2	4 4 8 = 4 + 4	4	4	4	4
3	יָפֵה נוֹף מְשׁוֹשׁ כָּל־הָאָרֶץ הִרְצִיּוֹן יִרְכָּתֵי צְפוֹן־ ² קַרְיַת מְלֶךְ רַב: (18 + 10 + 6 + 14 = 48) Total, v. 3	5 4 3 12 = 9 + 3	5	4	5	4
4	אֱלֹהִים בְּאֶרְמְנוֹתֶיהָ נוֹדַע לְמִשְׁגָּב: Total, v. 4	2 2 4 = 4 + 0	2	2	2	2
	Canto I Strophe 1 Total, v. 2-4	24 = 17 + 7	17	7	24	0

5	כִּי־הִנֵּה הַמַּלְכִּים נוֹעְדוּ־ [^] עָבְרוּ יַחְדָּו: Total, v. 5	4	4	4	4	2	2	2	6 = 4 + 2 = 6 + 0
6	הַמָּה רְאוּ כֵן תִּמְהוּ־ [^] נִבְהָלוּ נִחְפְּזוּ: Total, v. 6	5	4	4	4	2	2	2	6 = 4 + 2 = 6 + 0
7	רְעָה אֲחֻזָּתָם שָׁם־ [^] חֵיל כִּי־לָרָה: Total, v. 7	6	3	3	3	2	2	2	5 = 3 + 2 = 5 + 0
	Canticle II.1 Strophe 2 Total, v. 5-7								17 = 11 + 6 = 17 + 0
	Total, v. 2-7								41 = 28 + 13 = 41 + 0
8	בְּרוּחַ קָדִים־ [^] תִּשְׁבֵר אֲנִיּוֹת תִּרְשִׁישׁ: Strophe 3 Total, v. 8	7	2	2		3	3		2 3 = 0 + 3 = 3 + 5
9	Middle verseline (9ab): כְּאֲשֶׁר שָׁמְעֵנוּ כֵן רָאִינוּ Middle words: 51+4+51 יְתוֹת צְבָאוֹת Middle colon: 17 + 1 + 17 בְּעִיר אֱלֹהֵינוּ Meaningful centre: (Middle) Strophe 4, v. 9	8	4	4	4	3	3	3	4 13 = 9 + 4 = 13 + 0
	Canticle II.2 Total, v. 8-9								18 = 11 + 7 = 13 + 5
10	דְּמִינוּ אֱלֹהִים חֲסֵדָה־ [^] בְּקָרֵב הִיכָלָה: Total, v. 10	10	3	3		2	2		3 5 = 3 + 2 = 0 + 5
11	כְּשִׁמְךָ אֱלֹהִים כֵן תִּהְלָתֶה־ עַל־קַצְוֵי־אֲרִץ־ [^] צֶדֶק מְלֵאָה יְמִינֶה־: 58 = יְמִינֶה־ (10 + 13 + 10 + 14 + 11 = 58) Total, v. 11	11	4	4	4	3	3	3	4 3 10 = 7 + 3 = 0 + 10
12	יִשְׁמַח תִּרְ־צִיּוֹן = 48 צִיּוֹן תִּגְלָנָה בְּנוֹת יְהוּדָה־ [^] (18 + 10 + 6 + 14 = 48) לְמַעַן מִשְׁפָּטֶיהָ: Total, v. 12	12	3	3	3	2	2	2	3 3 8 = 6 + 2 = 0 + 8
	Canticle II.3 Strophe 5 Total, v. 10-12								23 = 16 + 7 = 0 + 23
	Total, v. 8-12								41 = 27 + 14 = 13 + 28
	Canto II Total, v. 5-12								58 = 38 + 20 = 30 + 28

13	סִבּוּ צִיּוֹן וְתִקְיֹפוּתָּהּ סִפְּרוּ מִגְדְּלֶיהָ: Total, v. 13	13	3	3	3	
			<u>2</u>		<u>2</u>	<u>2</u>
			5	= 3	+ 2	= 5 + 0
14	שִׁיתוּ לְבַבְכֶם לְחִילָהּ פִּסְגּוֹ אֲרָמְנוֹתֶיהָ לְמַעַן תִּסְפְּרוּ לְדוֹר אַחֲרוֹן: Total, v. 14	14	3	3	3	
			<u>2</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>2</u>	
			4		4	4
			<u>9</u>	= 5	+ 4	= 9 + 0
	Strophe 6 Total, v. 13-14		14	= 8	+ 6	= 14 + 0
15*	כִּי זֶה אֱלֹהִים אֱלֹהֵינוּ עוֹלָם וָעֶד הוּא יִנְהַגֵנוּ עַל־מָוֶת [מוֹת]: Strophe 7 Total, v. 15 Canto III Total, v. 13-15 Total, v. 10-15 Total, v. 5-15 Total, v. 2-15	15	4	4	4	
			<u>2</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>2</u>	
			4		4	4
			<u>10</u>	= 6	+ 4	= 10 + 0
			<u>24</u>	= 14	+ 10	= 24 + 0
			<u>47</u>	= 30	+ 17	= 24 + 23
			<u>82</u>	= 52	+ 30	= 54 + 28
			<u>106</u>	= 69	+ 37	= 78 + 28
	With the heading and סִלָּה (1x), v. 1-15		111	= 73	+ 38	

* V. 15c: Some scholars read the two words עַל־מָוֶת in MT as one word, either as עַל־מָוֶת (compare Ps. 9:1), as in many Hebrew manuscripts, or עַל־מָוֶת (meaning uncertain – cf. עַל־מָוֶת in Ps. 46:1). Another possibility would be to read עַל־מָוֶת, which may mean 'eternally', in light of the LXX rendering *eis tous aionas*, 'for evermore'. However, on logotechnical grounds, the MT reading should be retained, except that עַל־מָוֶת, 'until death', should be read instead of עַל־מָוֶת.

Observations

- The arithmetic centre of the 106-word psalm is constituted by the 4 words in v. 9b-c, with 51 (3 x 17) words on either side (106 = 51 + 4 + 51):

בְּעִיר אֱלֹהֵינוּ יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת בְּעִיר אֱלֹהֵינוּ 'YHWH of Hosts in the city of our God'.

Since these words express the gist of the psalm, they may be regarded as a most appropriate meaningful centre on word level. However, an even better candidate is to be found on strophic level: v. 9, the middle strophe (7 = 3 + 1 + 3), which is highlighted by the fact that it contains the middle verseline, v. 9a-b (15 = 7 + 1 + 7) and the middle colon, v. 9c (35 = 17 + 1 + 17). It also stands out as a 'we'-section and by containing the only other occurrence of the name YHWH apart from the one in the opening verseline:

כַּאֲשֶׁר שָׁמַעְנוּ בֵּן רְאִינוּ בְּעִיר־יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת
בְּעִיר אֱלֹהֵינוּ אֱלֹהִים יְכוֹנְנָה עַד־עוֹלָם

As we have heard, so we have seen in the city of YHWH of Hosts:
In the city of our God // God establishes it forever.

- The word-count reveals a striking framework which determines the canto structure: the 58-word core of the poem (vs. 5-12) is enveloped by 48 words, with 24 words on either side (24 in vs. 2-5 and 24 in vs. 13-15):

Canto I vs. 2-5	Zion, the praiseworthy city of YHWH	24 words
Canto II vs. 5-12	YHWH has established his city	58 words
Canto III vs. 13-15	Familiarize posterity with Zion and YHWH	24 words.

A computation of the gematric value of the words in the psalm shows that **58** represents the numerical value of the word **יְמִיְנֶךָ**, 'your right hand' (v. 11c). I interpret this as a device consciously contrived by the author to symbolically emphasize YHWH's power (his right hand), which makes Zion invulnerable.

The number **48** (24 + 24), on the other hand, represents the numerical value of the word **צִיּוֹן**, 'Zion' (occurring in vs. 3, 12, and 13). That this is also a matter of conscious design is proved by the fact that the other Korahite Zion-psalm, [Psalm 87](#), is made up of exactly **48** words. The Zion-psalm in the Songs of Ascents, [Psalm 126](#), also comprises **48** words. Note that in both psalms 'Zion' occurs in the initial verse!

Consider also [Psalm 122](#), which deals with Jerusalem as the city of YHWH's temple and the residence of David. Though Zion is not explicitly mentioned, the section about Jerusalem (Ps. 122:3-9) is made up of **48** words: **24** describing the city (vs. 3-5), and **24** devoted to the call for prayers for its peace and prosperity (vs. 6-9).

Finally, one wonders whether it is just coincidence that Psalm 48 is the **48th** psalm in the Masoretic numbering in the Psalter.

3. The direction of address causes four caesurae between vs. 7||8||9||10 and 12||13, which may not be ignored. The direction of address determines the strophic structure of the text, by which it divides into the following unmistakable menorah pattern, with **v. 9** at the centre:

Strophe 1	vs. 2-5	YHWH is great and Zion is his city	24 words
Strophe 2	vs. 5-7	The kings are awe-struck and flee	17 words
Strophe 3	v. 8	God, you have defeated the seafaring powers	5 words
Strophe 4	v. 9	YHWH has established his city!	13 words
Strophe 5	vs. 10-12	God, we praise your name; let Zion rejoice	23 words
Strophe 6	vs. 13-14	Call to examine Zion and tell future generations	14 words
Strophe 7	v. 15	Concluding statement: this is how YHWH is!	10 words.

The sudden switch in **v. 8** to **2nd person**, the return in **v. 9** to **3rd person**, and the switch back in **vs. 10-12** to **2nd person**, functions as an attention-drawing device to highlight the meaningful centre in **v. 9**. See the General Introduction, "Special devices to highlight the meaningful centre". Being flanked by two prayers, the meaningful centre clearly stands out. It is additionally marked by the *selah* at the end of **v. 9**.

4. The divine name numbers occur in the following instances in the psalm:

vs. 2-4	17 words before atnach
vs. 5-7	17 words in total
vs. 10-15	17 words after atnach
vs. 5-15	52 (2 x 26) words before atnach
vs. 2-15	78 (3 x 26) words spoken about God.

5. The name **יהוה** occurs twice (vs. 2 and 9) and **אלהים** 8 times - compare Psalm 47.

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