

# Psalm 57— Logotechnical Analysis

## Guidelines

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

## Specific features of Psalm 57

- This is the last psalm in a series of 7 Davidic psalms (Psalms 51-57), coherent in form and content, comprising altogether **104** (4 x 26) verselines.
- In terms of its **14** verselines, the psalm divides into two parts of 7 verselines each: Canto I (vs. 2-6) and Canto II (vs. 7-12). It shares this feature with Psalm 56.
- It is significant that the prayer "Let your *glory* be all over the earth!" (v. 6b), at the arithmetic centre of the poem, is emphasized by the use of the *kabod* numbers and, more particularly, by the double *kabod* pattern (**55 = 32 + 23**), expressing God's glory.
- Like Psalms 55 and 56, this poem has an additional distinct meaningful centre in part of its text (vs. 2-6). As in the case of Psalm 55, this additional centre is probably highlighted by the unusual positioning of the *selah* in the middle of the verse (v. 4b).

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

- Van der Lugt: 2, 3-4, 5-6 || 7, 8-9, 10-12 ( 2 cantos with 6 strophes, 14 bicolic verselines with 28 cola).
- Fokkelman: 2, 3-4 || 5, 6, 7 || 8-9, 10-11, 12 (3 stanzas with 8 strophes, 14 verselines and 31 cola, taking v. 1a as a separate verseline and vs. 1b-d, 4, 8 and 9 as tricola).
- Labuschagne: same as Van der Lugt, except that I find 29 cola, maintaining MT in v. 4 (a tricolon!), while he takes v. 4b as part of v. 3. See below Observation 3.

## 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 in 3<sup>rd</sup> person.
- The numbering of the verselines is shown in **brown**.

		Total	a	b	c	d
1	לְמִנְצַחַת אֱלֹהִים תִּשְׁחַת לְדָוִד מִכְתָּם	5	5			
	בְּבָרְחוֹ מִפְּנֵי־שָׂאוֹל בְּמַעְרָה:	4		4		
	Heading, v. 1	9	= 5	+ 4		
2	חַנְּנִי אֱלֹהִים חַנְּנִי	1	3		3	
	כִּי בָדָה חֲסִידָה נַפְשִׁי		4	4		4
	וּבְצַל־כַּנְּפֵיךָ אֶחְסֶה	2	3	3		3
	עַד יַעֲבֹר הַיּוֹת:		3	3	3	
	Strophe 1 Total, v. 2	13	= 10	+ 3	= 13	+ 0
3	אֶקְרָא לְאֱלֹהִים עֲלִיּוֹן	3	3			3
	לְאֵל גֹּמֵר עָלַי:		3	3		3
4	יִשְׁלַח מִשְׁמַיִם יְיֹשִׁיעֵנִי	4	3	3		3
	חֲרָף שָׂאֵפֵי סֶלָה		2	2		2
Middle word	יִשְׁלַח אֱלֹהִים חֲסִדוֹ וְאַמְתּוֹ:	4		4		4
of Canto I:	49 = 24 + 1 + 24	Total, v. 4	9	= 5	+ 4	= 0 + 9
Strophe 2	Total, v. 3-4	15	= 8	+ 7	= 0	+ 15

5	נִפְשֵׁי בְּתוֹךְ לְבָאִם אֲשַׁכְּבָה	5	4	4	4
	לְהַטִּים בְּנֵי-אָדָם		3	3	3
	שְׁנֵיהֶם תְּנִית וְחֲצִי־אֶ֨	6	3	3	3
	וּלְשׁוֹנָם חָרַב תִּדְרֶה:		3	3	3
	Total, v. 5		$13 = 10 + 3 = 0 + 13$		
	Total, v. 2-5		$41 = 28 + 13 = 13 + 28$		
6	רוֹמְמָה עַל-הַשָּׁמַיִם אֱלֹהִים־אֱ	7	4	4	4
	עַל כָּל-הָאָרֶץ כְּבוֹדָךְ: <sup>א</sup>		4	4	4
	Middle colon: 29=14+1+14:		$8 = 4 + 4 = 8 + 0$		
	Four middle words: 94 = 45 + 4 + 45		$21 = 14 + 7 = 8 + 13$		
	Meaningful centre Strophe 3 Total, v. 5-6		$49 = 32 + 17 = 21 + 28$		
	Canto I Total, v. 2-6				
7	רִשַׁת הַכִּינוּי לַפְּעָמִי	8	3	3	3
	כִּפְרָה נִפְשֵׁי		2	2	2
	כָּרוּ לִפְנֵי שִׁיחָה־אֶ֨	9	3	3	3
	נִפְלוּ בְּתוֹכָהּ סִלָּה:		2	2	2
	Strophe 4 Total, v. 7		$10 = 8 + 2 = 0 + 10$		
8	נִכּוֹן לִבִּי אֱלֹהִים נִכּוֹן לִבִּי־אֱ	10	5	5	5
	אֲשִׁירָה וְאֹמְרָה:		2	2	2
	Total, v. 8		$7 = 5 + 2 = 7 + 0$		
	Total, v. 7-8		$17 = 13 + 4 = 7 + 10$		
9	עוֹרָה כְּבוֹדִי עוֹרָה תִּנְבְּלַ וְכִנּוֹר	11	5	5	5
	אֲעִירָה שְׁחַר:		2	2	2
	Total, v. 9		$7 = 7 + 0 = 7 + 0$		
	Strophe 5 Total, v. 8-9		$14 = 12 + 2 = 14 + 0$		
	Total, v. 7-9		$24 = 20 + 4 = 14 + 10$		
10*	אֹזְרָךְ בְּעַמִּים אֲרִנִּי־אֱ	12	3	3	3
	אֲזַמְרָךְ בְּלֵאֲמִים [בְּלֵאֲמִים]:		$\frac{2}{3}$	$\frac{2}{3}$	2
	Total, v. 10		$\frac{5}{6} = 3 + \frac{2}{3} = \frac{5}{6} + 0$		
	Total, v. 8-10		$\frac{19}{20} = 15 + \frac{4}{5} = \frac{19}{20} + 0$		
	Total, v. 7-10		$\frac{29}{30} = 23 + \frac{6}{7} = \frac{19}{20} + 10$		
	Total, v. 2-10		$\frac{78}{79} = 55 + \frac{23}{24} = \frac{40}{41} + 38$		
11	כִּי-נִדְּלַ עַד-שָׁמַיִם חֲסֵדָךְ־אֱ	13	5	5	5
	וְעַד-שְׁחָקִים אֲמַתָּךְ:		3	3	3
	Total, v. 11		$8 = 5 + 3 = 8 + 0$		
	Total, v. 7-11		$\frac{37}{38} = 28 + \frac{9}{10} = \frac{27}{28} + 10$		
12	רוֹמְמָה עַל-שָׁמַיִם אֱלֹהִים־אֱ	14	4	4	4
	עַל כָּל-הָאָרֶץ כְּבוֹדָךְ:		4	4	4
	Total, v. 12		$8 = 4 + 4 = 8 + 0$		
	Strophe 6 Total, v. 10-12		$\frac{21}{22} = 12 + \frac{9}{10} = \frac{21}{22} + 0$		
	Canto II Total, v. 7-12		$\frac{45}{46} = 32 + \frac{13}{14} = \frac{35}{36} + 10$		
	Total, v. 6-12		$\frac{53}{54} = 36 + \frac{17}{18} = \frac{43}{44} + 10$		
	Total, v. 2-12		$\frac{94}{95} = 64 + \frac{30}{31} = \frac{56}{57} + 38$		
	With the heading, v. 1-12		$\frac{103}{104} = 69 + \frac{34}{35}$		
	With 2x סִלָּה:		$\frac{105}{106} = 69 + \frac{36}{70}$		

\* Note: For the enigmatic words בְּלִ-אֲמִים, 'non-nations', of the Leningrad Codex in v. 10b (occurring also in Psalms 44:15, 108:4 and 149:7), see the note at the end of the chart in my Analysis of [Psalm 44](#).

The points of difference between Ps. 57:8-12 and the counterpart of these verses, Ps. 108:2-6, will be discussed in the Analysis of [Psalm 108](#).

## Observations

1. In terms of the 94 words of the poem (corrected text) the 4 words in v. 6b, constitute a meaningful arithmetic centre:  $94 = 45 + 4 + 45$ :

עַל כָּל-הָאָרֶץ כְּבוֹדְךָ, 'Let your glory be all over the earth!'

This is underscored by the fact that v. 6b happens to be the central colon in terms of the 29 cola:  $29 = 14 + 1 + 14$ .

2. The word כְּבוֹדְךָ, 'your glory', occurring in the arithmetic centre in v. 6b (and in v. 12b), is obviously a key-word that occasioned the use of the two *kabod* numbers, **23** and **32**. They clearly constitute the double *kabod* pattern in vs. 2-10 before atnach:

vs. 2-6             $49 = 32a + 17b$

vs. 7-10          $29 = 23a + 6b$

vs. 2-10          $78 = 55a + 23b$ .

3. The text clearly divides into two parts: vs. 2-6 (Canto I) and vs. 7-12 (Canto II), each of which is concluded by the refrain (in vs. 6 and 12). Compare [Psalm 56](#)!

With regard to the unusual positioning of *selah*, not at the end, but within v. 4, and immediately before the atnach, it is worth noting that the *selah* is situated just before the middle word of vs. 2-6, יִשְׁלַח, 'may (God) send', (v. 4b):  $49 = 24 + 1 + 24$ .

This seems to suggest that *selah* has here the function of directing attention to the middle word of vs. 2-6 (Canto I), or more probably to the whole sentence in v. 4c:

May God send his steadfast love and faithfulness!

For a similar function of the *selah*, in Psalm 55:20 – also within the verse! - see Observation 4 in my Analysis of [Psalm 55](#). The meaning 'weigh this' would be appropriate for the *selah* in both psalms.

It does not seem to be a matter of coincidence that not only Psalm 57, but also the two preceding poems, 55 and 56, have two distinct meaningful arithmetic centres. This strongly underscores the suggestion that the function of the unusual positioning of the *selahs* in Ps. 55:20 and 57:4 is to direct attention to the additional meaningful centres in both poems.

4. The division of the text into words in 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> person form shows that the **49** (7 x 7) words of vs. 2-6 (Canto I) divide into **21** (3 x 7) words in 2<sup>nd</sup> person, and **28** (4 x 7) in 3<sup>rd</sup> person. Since these **49** words also divide into **28** in vs. 2-4 and **21** in vs. 5-6, these divisions yield a numerical chiasmus, underscoring the unity of Canto I:

vs. 2-4             $28 = 13 + 15$

vs. 5-6             $21 = 8 + 13$

vs. 2-6             $49 = 21 + 28$

Note also that exactly **56** (8 x 7) words in total are addressed to God (column c), which supports the evidence shown above for the designed use of the number of fullness.

5. The word אֱלֹהִים, 'God', occurs 6 times, and, together with אֱל (v. 3), there are 7 references to God, while אֲדֹנָי (v. 10) and עֲלֵיוֹן (v. 3) occur once. The divine name numbers and the *kabod* numbers feature in the following way (note in particular the use of the double *kabod* pattern – see Observation 3 in my Analysis of [Psalm 55](#)):

vs. 2-6	<b>32</b> words before atnach and <b>17</b> after atnach
vs. 7-10	<b>23</b> words before atnach
vs. 2-10	<b>55</b> before atnach (distinct double <i>kabod</i> pattern!)
vs. 7-8	<b>17</b> words in total
vs. 2-10	<b>78</b> (3 x <b>26</b> ) words in total, with <b>23</b> after atnach
vs. 6-12	<b>17</b> words after atnach
vs. 2-12	<b>64</b> (2 x <b>32</b> ) words before atnach

Including the heading in the word-count (without the two *selahs*) yields:

vs. 1-12 (corrected)*	103 words = <b>69</b> (3 x <b>23</b> ) before, and <b>34</b> after atnach
vs. 1-12 (Codex L)*	<b>104</b> (4 x <b>26</b> ) = <b>69</b> before, and 35 after atnach.

It is fully justified, in my opinion, to conclude that the heading was composed in order to achieve a specific overall compositional formula (103 = **69a** + **34b**).

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