

# Psalm 74— Logotechnical Analysis

## Guidelines

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

## Specific features of Psalm 74

- Psalm 74 and Psalm 73 have several features in common. Both have a short introductory strophe, v. 1. Both have two cantos (**vs. 1-12** and **13-23**), each of which has its own meaningful centre on verseline level. And in both psalms the name YHWH occurs only once and has a distinct function. This is also the case in Psalm 75.
- The meaningful centre of the entire psalm is **v. 12**. The distinct meaningful centres of the two cantos, **v. 7** and **v. 18**, are remarkably alike. Particularly ingenious is the way in which these three centres are highlighted by focussing devices: first, the use of the **3<sup>rd</sup> person** form to highlight **v. 12**, second, the use of the single occurrence of the name YHWH to emphasize the meaningful centre of Canto II, **v. 18**, and third, the use of the keyword **שְׁמֹךְ**, 'your name', to link **v. 18** with **v. 7**, the meaningful centre of Canto I.
- In terms of content, the psalm divides into two parts, a division which overlies the proposed canto structure (vs. 1-12 and 13-23):
  - vs. 1-9**, supplication and lamentation, with **74** words (Column d),
  - vs. 10-23**, praise and the prayer for deliverance, with **119** (7 x 17) words (Column c).

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

- Van der Lugt: 1-2, 3-4, 5-6, 7-9 || 10-12, 13-15, 16-17 || 18-19, 20-21, 22-23 (3 cantos with 10 strophes, 23 verselines and 48 cola).
- Fokkelman: 1-3, 4-5 || 6-7, 8-9, 10-11 || 12-13, 14-15, 16-17 || 18-19, 20-21, 22-23 (4 stanzas with 11 strophes, 23 verselines and 49 cola, taking v. 20 as a tricolon).
- Labuschagne: 1, 2-3, 4-6 | 7-9 | 10-12 || 13-15, 16-17 | 18-19, 20-21, 22-23 (2 cantos with 5 Canticles, 10 strophes, 23 verselines and 49 cola, taking v. 20 as a tricolon).

## Logotechnical analysis

- Columns **a** and **b** show the number of words before and after the atnach.
- Column **c**: praise and the prayer for deliverance; **d**: supplication and lamentation.
- The numbering of the verselines is in **brown**.

		Total	a	b	c	d
1	מְשָׁכִיל לְאַסֶּךָ לְמַה אֱלֹהִים זָנַחְתָּ לְנִצְחָה יַעֲשֶׂן אַפְּךָ בְּצֹאן מִרְעִיתֶךָ: Strophe 1 Total, v. 1	<u>2</u>	<u>2</u>			
	1	4	4			4
		4		4		4
		8	= 4	+ 4	= 0	+ 8
2	זָכַר עֲדַתְךָ קְנִיַת קָדָם גִּאֲלֹת שְׁבֹט נַחֲלֹתֶיךָ הִרְצִיּוֹן זֶה שְׁכַנְתָּ בוֹ: Total, v. 2	2	4	4		4
		3	3			3
		5		5		5
		12	= 7	+ 5	= 0	+ 12
3	הֲרִימָה פְּעֻמֶיךָ לְמִשְׁאוֹת נִצְחָה כָּל־הִרְעֵ אוֹיֵב בְּקֶדֶשׁ: Total, v. 3 Strophe 2 Total, v. 2-3	3	4	4		4
		4		4		4
		8	= 4	+ 4	= 0	+ 8
		20	= 11	+ 9	= 0	+ 20

4	שָׁאֲנוּ צָרָרִיךְ בְּקָרֵב מוֹעֲדֶךָ <sup>^</sup> שָׁמוּ אוֹתָתָם אֹתוֹת: Total, v. 4	4	4	4	4	3	3	3	7 = 4 + 3 = 0 + 7
5	יִוְדַע כָּמֵבִיא לְמַעְלָה <sup>^</sup> בְּסִבְדֵי-עַץ קָרְדָּמוֹת: Total, v. 5	5	3	3	3	3	3	3	6 = 3 + 3 = 0 + 6
6*	וְשִׁתָּה פֶתוּחִיָּה יִחַד <sup>^</sup> בְּכִשְׁלִיל וְכִילְפַת יִהְלֶמוֹן: Total, v. 6 Strophe 3 Total, v. 4-6 Canticle I.1 Total, v. 1-6	6	3	3	3	3	3	3	6 = 3 + 3 = 0 + 6 19 = 10 + 9 = 0 + 19 47 = 25 + 22 = 0 + 47
7	Middle words of Canto I: 97 = 47 + 3 + 47 שְׁלַחוּ בְּאֵשׁ מִקְדָּשְׁךָ <sup>^</sup> לְאֶרֶץ חֲלָלוּ מִשְׁכַּן-שְׁמֶךָ: Total, v. 7 Total, v. 4-7 Total, v. 3-7 Total, v. 1-7	7	3	3	3	4	4	4	7 = 3 + 4 = 0 + 7 26 = 13 + 13 = 0 + 26 34 = 17 + 17 = 0 + 34 54 = 28 + 26 = 0 + 54
8	אָמְרוּ בְלִבָּם נִינֵם יִחַד <sup>^</sup> שָׂרְפוּ כָל-מוֹעֲדֵי-אֵל בְּאֶרֶץ: Total, v. 8	8	4	4	4	5	5	5	9 = 4 + 5 = 0 + 9
9	אוֹתֵינוּ לֹא רָאִינוּ אֵין-עוֹד נִבְיָא <sup>^</sup> וְלֹא-אֶתְנוּ יָדַע עַד-מָה: Total, v. 9 Canticle I.2 Strophe 4 Total, v. 7-9 Total, v. 2-9 Total, v. 1-9	9	3	3	3	3	3	3	5 = 3 + 3 = 0 + 5 11 = 6 + 5 = 0 + 11 27 = 13 + 14 = 0 + 27 66 = 34 + 32 = 0 + 66 74 = 38 + 36 = 0 + 74
10	עַד-מָתַי אֱלֹהִים יִתְרַף צָרָה יִנְאֵץ אוֹיֵב שְׁמֶךָ לְנֹצַח: Total, v. 10	10	5	5	5	4	4	4	9 = 5 + 4 = 9 + 0
11*	לָמָּה תִּשָּׁב יָדְךָ וַיִּמְיָנֶךָ <sup>^</sup> מִקְרֵב חִיקֶךָ כָּלָה: Total, v. 11	11	4	4	4	3	3	3	7 = 4 + 3 = 7 + 0
12	Middle colon: 24+1+24 Middle word: 96+1+96 Middle verseline (3rd person!) Canticle I.3 Strophe 5 Total, v. 10-12 Total, v. 9-12 Canto I Total, v. 1-12	12	3	3	3	4	4	4	7 = 3 + 4 = 7 + 0 23 = 11 + 12 = 23 + 0 34 = 17 + 17 = 23 + 11 97 = 50 + 47 = 23 + 74

13	<p>פּוֹרְרֵת בְּעֶזֶד יָם<sup>1</sup> אֶתָּה</p> <p>שְׁבֵרֵת רְאִשֵׁי תַנְיָנִים עַל־הַמַּיִם:</p> <p>Total, v. 13</p> <p>Total, v. 8-13</p>	13	<p>4      4                      4</p> <hr/> <p>5                                  5                      5</p> <hr/> <p>9 = 4 + 5 = 9 + 0</p> <hr/> <p><b>52 = 25 + 27 = 32 + 20</b></p>
14	<p>רְצַצְתָּ רְאִשֵׁי לַיְיִתָּא<sup>2</sup> אֶתָּה</p> <p>תִּתְנַנְנוּ מֵאֲכָל לֶעָם לְצִיִּים:</p> <p>Total, v. 14</p> <p>Total, v. 13-14</p>	14	<p>4      4                      4</p> <hr/> <p>4                                  4                      4</p> <hr/> <p>8 = 4 + 4 = 8 + 0</p> <hr/> <p><b>17 = 8 + 9 = 17 + 0</b></p>
15	<p>בְּקַעַתָּ מַעֲיָן וְנַחֲלָ<sup>3</sup> אֶתָּה</p> <p>הוֹבִשְׁתָּ נְהָרוֹת אֵיתָן<sup>4</sup> אֶתָּה</p> <p>Total, v. 15</p> <p><b>Strophe 6 Total, v. 13-15</b></p> <p>Total, v. 8-15</p> <p>Total, v. 3-15</p>	15	<p>4      4                      4</p> <hr/> <p>4                                  4                      4</p> <hr/> <p>8 = 4 + 4 = 8 + 0</p> <hr/> <p><b>25 = 12 + 13 = 25 + 0</b></p> <hr/> <p><b>68 = 33 + 35 = 48 + 20</b></p> <hr/> <p><b>102 = 50 + 52 = 48 + 54</b></p>
16	<p>לָךְ יוֹם אַף־לָךְ לַיְלָהּ<sup>5</sup> אֶתָּה</p> <p>הַכִּינּוֹת מְאוּר וְשִׁמְשׁ:</p> <p>Total, v. 16</p> <p>Numerical, v. 13-14</p> <p>Chiasmus, v. 15-16</p> <p>Total, v. 13-16</p>	16	<p>5      5                      5</p> <hr/> <p>4                                  4                      4</p> <hr/> <p>9 = 5 + 4 = 9 + 0</p> <hr/> <p><b>17 = 8 + 9 = 17 + 0</b></p> <hr/> <p><b>17 = 9 + 8 = 17 + 0</b></p> <hr/> <p><b>34 = 17 + 17 = 34 + 0</b></p>
17	<p>הַצִּבְתָּ כָּל־גְּבוּלוֹת אֶרֶץ<sup>6</sup> אֶתָּה</p> <p>קִיץ וְחֹרֶף יִצְרְתָם<sup>7</sup> אֶתָּה</p> <p>Total, v. 17</p> <p><b>Strophe 7 Total, v. 16-17</b></p> <p>Total, v. 15-17</p> <p>Total, v. 14-17</p> <p><b>Canticle II.1 Total, v. 13-17</b></p> <p>Total, v. 10-17</p> <p>Total, v. 1-17</p>	17	<p>5      5                      5</p> <hr/> <p>4                                  4                      4</p> <hr/> <p>9 = 5 + 4 = 9 + 0</p> <hr/> <p><b>18 = 10 + 8 = 18 + 0</b></p> <hr/> <p><b>26 = 12 + 14 = 26 + 0</b></p> <hr/> <p><b>34 = 18 + 16 = 34 + 0</b></p> <hr/> <p><b>43 = 22 + 21 = 43 + 0</b></p> <hr/> <p><b>66 = 34 + 32 = 66 + 0</b></p> <hr/> <p><b>140 = 72 + 68 = 66 + 74</b></p>
18	<p><b>Middle verseline of 13-23:</b> 11 = 5 + 1 + 5</p> <p>זְכַר־זֹאת אוֹיֵב חֶרֶף יְהוָה<sup>8</sup> וְעַם נֹכַח נֶאֱצַו שְׁמֹד:</p> <p><b>יהוה occurs only here</b></p> <p>Total, v. 18</p>	18	<p>5      5                      5</p> <hr/> <p>4                                  4                      4</p> <hr/> <p>9 = 5 + 4 = 9 + 0</p>
19	<p>אֶל־תִּתֵּן לַחַיִּת נֶפֶשׁ תּוֹרְךָ<sup>9</sup> אֶתָּה</p> <p>חַיִּת עֲנִיָּיִךְ אֶל־תִּשְׁכַּח לְנִצְחָ:</p> <p>Total, v. 19</p> <p><b>Strophe 8 Total, v. 18-19</b></p>	19	<p>5      5                      5</p> <hr/> <p>5                                  5                      5</p> <hr/> <p>10 = 5 + 5 = 10 + 0</p> <hr/> <p><b>19 = 10 + 9 = 19 + 0</b></p>
20	<p>הַבֵּט לְבַרִּיתָ<sup>10</sup> אֶתָּה</p> <p>כִּי מָלְאוּ מַחֲשַׁבֵי־אֶרֶץ נְאוֹת חָמָס:</p> <p>Total, v. 20</p> <p>Total, v. 9-20</p>	20	<p>2      2                      2</p> <hr/> <p>4                                  4                      4</p> <hr/> <p>2                                  2                      2</p> <hr/> <p>8 = 2 + 6 = 8 + 0</p> <hr/> <p><b>104 = 52 + 52 = 93 + 11</b></p>
21	<p>אֶל־יֵשֶׁב דָּךְ גִּבְלָם<sup>11</sup> אֶתָּה</p> <p>עֲנִי וְאֶבְיוֹן יִתְלַלּוּ שְׁמֹד:</p> <p>Total, v. 21</p> <p><b>Strophe 9 Total, v. 20-21</b></p> <p>Total, v. 12-21</p>	21	<p>4      4                      4</p> <hr/> <p>4                                  4                      4</p> <hr/> <p>8 = 4 + 4 = 8 + 0</p> <hr/> <p><b>16 = 6 + 10 = 16 + 0</b></p> <hr/> <p><b>85 = 41 + 44 = 85 + 0</b></p>

22	קוֹמָה אֱלֹהִים רִיבָה רִיבָהּ ^	22	4	4	4
	זְכֹר חֲרַפְתָּהּ מִנִּי-נֹבֵל כָּל-הַיּוֹם:		6	6	6
	Total, v. 22		10	= 4 + 6	= 10 + 0
23	אֶל-תִּשְׁבַּח קוֹל צִרְרִיךָ ^	23	4	4	4
	שְׂאוֹן קָמִיד עֲלֶה תָמִיד:		4	4	4
	Total, v. 23		8	= 4 + 4	= 8 + 0
	<b>Strophe 10</b> Total, v. 22-23		18	= 8 + 10	= 18 + 0
	Total, v. 21-23		26	= 12 + 14	= 26 + 0
	Total, v. 20-23		34	= 14 + 20	= 34 + 0
	<b>Canticle II.2</b> Total, v. 18-23		53	= 24 + 29	= 53 + 0
	<b>Canto II</b> Total, v. 13-23		96	= 46 + 50	= 96 + 0
	Total, v. 10-23		119	= 58 + 61	= 119 + 0
	Total, v. 9-23		130	= 64 + 66	= 119 + 11
	Total, v. 1-23		193	= 96 + 97	= 119 + 74
	With the heading, v. 1-23		195	= 98 + 97	

\* In v. 6a, I follow the Qere reading וַעֲתָה, 'and then', as well as in v. 11b, הַיִּקָּד, 'your bosom'.

## Observations

- In terms of the 193 words of the poem, the middle word is הָאָרֶץ, 'the earth', in v. 12b (193 = 96 + 1 + 96). The arithmetic centre falls precisely within the central verseline, v. 12 (23 = 11 + 1 + 11), which constitutes the meaningful centre:

וּאֱלֹהִים מֶלְכִי מִקְדָּם ^ פֵּעַל יְשׁוּעוֹת בְּקֶרֶב הָאָרֶץ

Yes, God is my king from of old // working salvation in the midst of the earth.

The meaningful centre is strongly emphasized by the fact that it refers to God in 3<sup>rd</sup> person form - the only instance in the poem - which is throughout composed as a prayer addressed to God in 2<sup>nd</sup> person. For such devices to highlight the meaningful centre, see the [General Introduction](#) under "Special devices to highlight the meaningful centre".

- In terms of content, v. 12 apparently rounds off vs. 1-11 with a concluding statement expressing trust in God and hope for salvation, to constitute **Canto I** (vs. 1-12). At the same time, it functions as a bridge to the rest of the poem, **Canto II** (vs. 13-23), which divides into two parts: **Canticle II.1** (vs. 13-17), the glorification of YHWH as Creator and Saviour, and the prayer for deliverance, **Canticle II.2** (vs. 18-23). My supposition that each of the two sections constitutes a coherent literary unit, is strongly corroborated by the fact that each has a meaningful centre of its own:

That of **Canto I** is constituted by the 3 words of v. 7a (97 = 47 + 3 + 47):

שְׁלַחוּ בָאֵשׁ מִקְדָּשְׁךָ

They set your sanctuary on fire!

which is a most eloquent expression of the quintessence of the lamentation within this section. Note the central position of בָּאֵשׁ.

Since the 3-word centre is an integral component of v. 7, the entire verseline may be regarded as the larger meaningful centre of this section:

שְׁלַחוּ בָאֵשׁ מִקְדָּשְׁךָ לְאָרֶץ חֲלָלוּ מִשְׁכַּן-שְׁמֶךָ:

They set your sanctuary on fire // they utterly desecrated the abode of your name!

My supposition that this is the consciously designed meaningful centre of Canto I gains credibility in light of the similar meaningful centre of **Canto II**, its central verseline, v. 18 (11 = 5 + 1 + 5):

זְכֹר־זאת אוֹיֵב חֲרַף יְהוָה ^ וְעַם נְבָל נֶאֱצַו שְׁמִיךְ

Remember this, YHWH, the enemy scoffed // a foolish people reviled **your name!**

In the supplicant's appeal to God to take action, this is very meaningful, because it expresses his motivation. What is really at stake is the desecration of God's name. This is skilfully highlighted by the fact that the name **יהוה** - which appears only here - is positioned precisely at the centre of these 9 words! See Observation 5 below.

The explicit reference to God's desecrated name (**שְׁמִיךְ**) - in the heart of Canto II - clearly alludes to the mention of his reviled name (**שְׁמִיךְ**) in the heart of Canto I, v. 7. The function of this keyword is obviously to emphasize the connection between the meaningful centres of the two cantos. It also reverberates in Ps. 75:2b and 76:2b, which strongly suggests common authorship for at least Pss. 74-76.

3. The unity of Canticle II.1, vs. 13-17, is underscored by the fact that it is made up of **43** words divided into **17** in 13-14 (God's victory over the forces of chaos and evil) and **26** in 15-17 (God's care for the earth). It is additionally reinforced by the use of a perfect numerical chiasmus that ties vs. 13-14 and 15-16 together – see the chart. And finally, the **7** occurrences of the personal pronoun **אַתָּה**, 'you', in Canticle II.1 not only emphasize the fullness of YHWH's intervention in history, but also buttress the literary unity of the passage.

The use of the 2<sup>nd</sup> person personal pronoun in a series of **7** (menorah pattern) is very reminiscent of the similar use of the 2<sup>nd</sup> person pronominal suffix in Psalm 8. See Observation 4 in my Analysis of [Psalm 8](#), and compare the 3-word meaningful centre of [Psalm 76](#), **אַתָּה נוֹרָא אַתָּה**, You, awesome You!

4. The divine name numbers are woven into the fabric of the text as follows:
 

vs. 4-7	<b>26</b> words in total
vs. 3-7	<b>34</b> words in total, with <b>17</b> before, and <b>17</b> after atnach
vs. 9-12	<b>34</b> words in total, with <b>17</b> before, and <b>17</b> after atnach
vs. 2-9	<b>34</b> (2 x <b>17</b> ) words before atnach
vs. 8-13	<b>52</b> ( 2 x <b>26</b> ) words in total
vs. 8-15	<b>68</b> (4 x <b>17</b> ) words in total
vs. 3-15	<b>102</b> (6 x <b>17</b> ) words in total, with <b>52</b> (2 x <b>26</b> ) after atnach
vs. 13-14	<b>17</b> words in total
vs. 13-16	<b>34</b> words in total, with <b>17</b> before, and <b>17</b> after atnach
vs. 15-16	<b>17</b> words in total
vs. 14-17	<b>34</b> ( 2 x <b>17</b> ) words in total
vs. 10-17	<b>34</b> (2 x <b>17</b> ) words before atnach
vs. 1-17	<b>68</b> (4 x <b>17</b> ) words after atnach
vs. 9-20	<b>104</b> (4 x <b>26</b> ) words in total, with <b>52</b> before and <b>52</b> after atnach
vs. 12-21	<b>85</b> (5 x <b>17</b> ) words in total
vs. 21-23	<b>26</b> words in total
vs. 20-23	<b>34</b> (2 x <b>17</b> ) words in total
vs. 10-23	<b>119</b> (7 x <b>17</b> ) words in total
vs. 9-23	<b>130</b> (5 x <b>26</b> ) words in total.

5. The word אֱלֹהִים occurs 4 times, and אֵל once (v. 8b), while the name יְהוָה features only once (v. 18a), right in the middle of the 9-word meaningful centre of Canto II, as a special device highlighting what is really at stake: YHWH's name. See Observation 2 above, and compare Observation 7 in my Analysis of [Psalm 75](#) for a similar highlighting function of the single occurrence of the Name there.

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