

Psalm 75— 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 75

- Psalm 75 shares several features with the two preceding psalms, e.g., the short introductory strophe (v. 2), the single occurrence of the name YHWH, and the use of the direction of address to generate extra divine name numbers.
- Like Psalms 50, 81 and 82, Psalm 75 contains an oracle.
- The high frequency of the number 7 and its multiples accounts for the relatively low frequency of the divine name numbers. However, the editor(s) of the Psalter compensated this by the 6-word heading, which generated extra divine name numbers.
- The form and direction of address are skilfully used to give structure to the text:
 - 1st person plural (v. 2) introductory verseline addressed *to God*,
 - 1st person singular (vs. 3-6) words spoken *by God*,
 - 1st person singular in the address to *the wicked* (vs. 7-9) spoken *about God*,
 - 1st person singular addressed to *the people* (vs. 10-11) spoken *about God*.

Strophic structure - Canto/Stanza boundary: ||

- Van der Lugt: 2, 3-4, 5-6 || 7-8, 9, 10-11 (2 cantos with 6 strophes, 11 verselines and 23 cola, disregarding the atnach at the end of 9d by taking the first two words of 9d as part of 9c, and the last two as part of 9e).
- Fokkelman: similarly, except that he finds 24 cola, taking v. 9c as a separate colon and retaining the *atnach* at the end of 9d.
- Labuschagne: 2, 3-4, 5-6 || 7-8, 9 || 10-11 (like Fokkelman, but I find 3 cantos).

Logotechnical analysis

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

		Total	a	b	c	d
1	לְמִנְצַח אֵל-תִּשְׁחַתּוּ מִזְמוֹר לְאַסָּף שִׁיר:	6	3	3		
	Heading, v. 1	6	= 3	+ 3		
2	הוֹדִינוּ לְךָ אֱלֹהִים 1	3	3		3	
	הוֹדִינוּ וְקָרוֹב שְׁמוֹךָ See Observation 7	3	3		3	
	סָפְרוּ נִפְלְאוֹתֶיךָ:	2		2	2	
	Strophe 1 Total, v. 2	8	= 6	+ 2	= 8	+ 0
3	כִּי אָקַח מוֹעֵד 2	3	3			3
	אֲנִי מִיִּשְׂרָאֵל אֶשְׁפֹּט:	3		3		3
	Total, v. 3	6	= 3	+ 3	= 0	+ 6
4	בְּמִגְוִי אֶרְץ וְכָל-יֹשְׁבֵיהָ 3	4	4			4
	אֲנֹכִי תְכַנְּתִי עַמּוּדֶיהָ סֵלַח:	3		3		3
	Total, v. 4	7	= 4	+ 3	= 0	+ 7
	Strophe 2 Total, v. 3-4	13	= 7	+ 6	= 0	+ 13

5	אָמַרְתִּי לְהוֹלִלִים אֶל־תְּהַלּוּ ^א	4	4	4	4
	וְלִרְשָׁעִים אֶל־תְּרִימוּ קָרְן׃		4	4	4
	Total, v. 5		8	= 4 + 4 = 0 + 8	
6	אֶל־תְּרִימוּ לְמִרוֹם קַרְנֵכֶם ^א	5	4	4	4
	תִּדְבְּרוּ בְּצוֹאֵר עֵתֶק׃		3	3	3
	Total, v. 6		7	= 4 + 3 = 0 + 7	
	Total, v. 3-4		13	= 7 + 8 = 0 + 13	
	Strophe 3 Total, v. 5-6		15	= 8 + 7 = 0 + 15	
	Numerical Chiasmus Total, v. 3-6		28	= 15 + 13 = 0 + 28	
	Canto I Total, v. 2-6		36	= 21 + 15 = 8 + 28	
7	Middle verseline: כִּי לֹא מִמוּצָא וּמִמְעֵרָב ^א	6	4	4	4
	Middle cola: 11+2+11 : וְלֹא מִמְדְּבַר הַרִים׃		3	3	3
	Middle words: 80 = 37 + 6 + 37 Total, v. 7		7	= 4 + 3 = 7 + 0	
8	כִּי־אֱלֹהִים שַׁפְטֵא ^א	7	3	3	3
	זֶה יִשְׁפִּיל זֶה יָרִים׃		4	4	4
	Total, v. 8		7	= 3 + 4 = 7 + 0	
	Strophe 4 Total, v. 7-8		14	= 7 + 7 = 14 + 0	
	Total, v. 5-8		29	= 15 + 14 = 14 + 15	
	Total, v. 3-8		42	= 22 + 20 = 14 + 28	
9	Occurs only here כִּי כּוֹס בִּיד־יְהוָה ^א	8	4	4	4
	וַיִּין חֶמֶר מְלֵא מִסָּךְ		4	4	4
	וַיִּגַּר מְזֶה		2	2	2
	אֶדְ־שְׁמֶרֶיָהּ וּמִצּוֹ יִשְׁתּוּ ^א	9	4	4	4
	כָּל רִשְׁעֵי־אָרֶץ׃		3	3	3
	Strophe 5 Total, v. 9		17	= 14 + 3 = 17 + 0	
	Canto II Total, v. 7-9		31	= 21 + 10 = 31 + 0	
	Total, v. 5-9		46	= 29 + 17 = 31 + 15	
10	וַאֲנִי אֲנִיד לְעֵלָם ^א	10	3	3	3
	אֲזַמְּרָה לְאֱלֹהֵי יַעֲקֹב׃		3	3	3
	Total, v. 10		6	= 3 + 3 = 6 + 0	
11	וְכָל־קַרְנֵי רִשְׁעִים אֲגַדֵּעַ ^א	11	4	4	4
	תִּרְוַמְנָה קַרְנוֹת צַדִּיק׃		3	3	3
	Total, v. 11		7	= 4 + 3 = 7 + 0	
	Canto III Strophe 6 Total, v. 10-11		13	= 7 + 6 = 13 + 0	
	Total, v. 9-11		30	= 21 + 9 = 30 + 0	
	Total, v. 3-11		72	= 43 + 29 = 44 + 28	
	Total, v. 2-11		80	= 49 + 31 = 52 + 28	
	With the heading, v. 1-11		86	= 52 + 34	
	With heading and סְלָה (1x), v. 1-11		87	= 52 + 35	

Observations

1. In terms of the 80 words of the poem, the two middle words are situated around the atnach in v. 7, **וּמִמְעַרְב־אֶ וְלֹא**, which cannot be regarded as a meaningful centre. A better candidate on word level would be the six middle words (v. 7, excluding the conjunction כִּי): $80 = 37 + 6 + 37$. However, it is more likely that we have to look for the meaningful centre in terms of the poetic structure. It is not surprising to find that the entire v. 7 is the middle verseline ($11 = 5 + 1 + 5$), which coincides with, and is strengthened by, the 2 middle cola ($24 = 11 + 2 + 11$):

כִּי לֹא מִמּוֹצֵא וּמִמְעַרְב־אֶ וְלֹא מִמְדִּבְרֵי הָרִים

Not from the east or from the west // and not from the wilderness comes lifting up.

Therefore, the **7** words of the middle verseline constitute the meaningful centre of the poem despite the uncertainty about the precise meaning of the sentence. If the use of **7** is not a matter of chance, the number of fullness symbolizes the fullness of the 'lifting up', the foolhardy insolence for which the psalmist chides the boastful and the wicked. The number **7** occurs rather frequently elsewhere in the text – see the chart.

As in many psalms, the meaningful centre is positioned at the point in the text where there is a change in the direction of address. Here it falls directly after the divine speech (vs. 3-6), at the beginning of the section spoken by the psalmist (vs. 7-11). See the General Introduction, "Special devices to highlight the meaningful centre".

2. One of the interesting features of the psalm is the abrupt switch from the words spoken by the psalmist (1st person plural in v. 2) to words spoken by God (1st person singular in vs. 3-6, Column d), back to words spoken by the psalmist, referring to God in 3rd person (1st person singular in vs. 7-9, and explicitly in vs. 10-11).
3. The use of an oracle is a feature Psalm 75 shares with other Asaphite psalms (50, 81 and 82). In this case, the oracle in vs. 3-6 (Column d) is strongly thrown into relief by the fact that its **28** words are enveloped by **52** (2×26) words (Column c). In addition to this, the theme of the 'lifting up' of the horn, at the end of the oracle: "do not lift up your horn on high" (v. 6), helps to demarcate the speaker's address in vs. 7-11 (Cantos II and III). The theme clearly functions as a device for inclusion: the speaker opens his address with an explicit reference to the idea of 'lifting up' (v. 7b), and concludes it with his statement about the horns of the wicked being cut off, and the horns of the righteous being lifted up (v. 11).*

In combination with the logotechnical aspects, this definitively settles the question regarding the precise extent of the oracle. The evidence strongly suggests that the oracle is not confined to the words in vs. 3-4, or 3-5, as some scholars claim, but comprises vs. 3-6. This means that it is only from v. 7 onwards that *the psalmist* addresses the boastful and the wicked. Contrary to the general opinion, I do not regard v. 11 as words attributed to God. As in v. 10, it is the psalmist who speaks, expressing his confession and praise of God by which he will break the strength of the wicked and elevate the strength of the righteous.

* I am indebted to Dr. Jim McMillan for this observation.

4. These considerations suggest the following canto division:
- | | | |
|-----------|-----------|---|
| vs. 2-6 | Canto I | Introductory praise addressed to God ("we"-form), v. 2 followed by the oracle, vs. 3-6 |
| vs. 7-9 | Canto II | Words addressed to the boastful and the wicked |
| vs. 10-11 | Canto III | Concluding words spoken by the psalmist ("I"-form). |

The oracle itself divides into two parts, vs. 3-4 and 5-6; they are differentiated by *selah*, but at the same time bound together by a numerical chiasmus – see the chart.

5. A specific feature of the poem is the frequent use of the number **7** and its multiples (in bold face) and as a result, the relatively low frequency of occurrences of the divine name numbers. Apart from the **52** (2 x **26**) words in Column c, there are only 2 instances: the **17** words in v. 9 (precisely where we find the only occurrence of the name יהוה) and the **17** words after *atnach* in vs. 5-9.
6. It is interesting to note that, including the 6-word heading - which seems to be rather 'inflated' - the text has 86 words, with **52** (2 x **26**) before, and **34** (2 x **17**) after *atnach*. This may be interpreted as suggesting that the editor(s) of the Psalter consciously designed a 6-words heading divided into 3 words before and 3 after *atnach* in order to achieve a compositional formula that 'improved' the original formula.
7. The word אֱלֹהִים occurs three times (vs. 2a, 8a and 10b). As in Psalms 73 and 74, the name יהוה occurs only once: significantly in the exceptionally long **17**-word verse 9, where the divine name number represents the presence of God through his Name in the psalm. The function of the single occurrence of the Name is obviously to draw special attention to this specific statement. Compare Psalms 73, 74, 76 and 77 for a similar highlighting function of the single occurrence of the Name. See Observation 7 in my Analysis of [Psalm 73](#), Observation 5 in my Analysis of [Psalm 74](#), Observation 5 in that of [Psalm 76](#) and Observation 7 in my Analysis of [Psalm 77](#).

The keyword שְׁמֶךָ, 'your name', featuring twice in Psalm 74, reappears in v. 2b and reverberates in Ps. 76:2b as שְׁמוֹ. See Observation 2 in my Analysis of Psalm 74.

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