

Psalm 78— 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 78

- From a logotechnical point of view, the most outstanding feature of Psalm 78 is the relatively low density of the divine name numbers on the level of words. This can be explained by the fact that the structure of the text is governed by the number **11**, a feature it shares with Judges 5. The structuring building blocks are arranged in a very regular fashion: **11 + 33 + 33 = 77** verselines on canto level, **4 + 6 + 7 + 7 + 6 = 30** strophes, **2 + 2 + 2 + 2 = 8** canticles, **2 + 2 = 4** sub-cantos, and **1 + 2** cantos.
- The consciously designed meaningful centre is the middle verseline, **v. 35** (**38 + 1 + 38**). It is significantly highlighted by the divine title **עֲלִיּוֹן**, of which the *middle instance* (of the **7** occurrences in the **11** Asaphite psalms) falls precisely within **v. 35**! Moreover, the numerical value of **עֲלִיּוֹן**, **58**, determines the number of words in the middle canticle, **vs. 32-39**. The very next verse, v. 36, after the middle verseline, is marked in the margin of the Leningrad Codex as the middle Masoretic verse of the Book of Psalms. To crown it all, Psalm 78 is positioned at the centre of the **11** Asaphite psalms (73-83) in Book III.
- A feature Psalm 78 shares with a considerable number of psalms is that it has distinct meaningful centres elsewhere in the text, in addition to that of the psalm as a whole.

Strophic structure - Boundary of Canto: ||| Sub-canto: || Canticle: |

- Van der Lugt: 1-2, 3-4, 5-6, 7-8 ||| 9-11, 12-14, 15-16 | 17-19, 20, 21-22 || 23-25, 26-28, 29-31 | 32-33, 34-35, 36-37, 38-39 ||| 40-41, 42-44, 45-46, 47-48 | 49-51, 52-53, 54-55 ||| 56-58, 59-61, 62-64 | 65-66, 67-69, 70-72 (3 cantos divided into sub-cantos and canticles, with 30 strophes, **77** verselines and 163 cola).
- Fokkelman: 1-3, 4 | 5-6, 7-8 ||| 9-11, 12-13, 14-16 | 17-18, 19-20, 21-22 | 23-25, 26-28, 29-31 ||| 32-33, 34-35 | 36-37, 38-39 | 40-41, 42-43 ||| 44-45, 46-47 | 48-49, 50-51 | 52-53, 54-55 | 56-58, 59-60 ||| 61-62, 63-64, 65-66 | 67-69, 70-72 (5 stanzas, 14 sub-sections, with 32 strophes, **77** verselines and 165 cola (taking vs. 9 and 20a-b as tricola).
- Labuschagne: same as Van der Lugt.

Logotechnical analysis

- Columns **a** and **b** show the number of words before and after the atnach.
- Column **c**: words in Cantos II and III; **d**: words in the Prologue, Canto I.
- The verselines are numbered in **violet**.

	Vsl.	Total	a	b	c	d
1	מְשִׁבֵּל לְאַסָּף	Heading	2	2		
	1	הֲאֵינָהּ עַמִּי תוֹרַתִּי	3	3		3
		2	4		4	4
2	2	אֶפְתָּחָהּ בְּמִשְׁלַל פִּי	3	3		3
		3	4		4	4
		Strophe 1	14	= 6	+ 8	= 0 + 14
		Total, v. 1-2				

3	אֲשֶׁר שָׁמַעְנוּ וַנִּדְעֵם [^] 3	3	3	3
	וְאָבֹתֵינוּ סִפְרוּ-לָנוּ:	3		3
4	לֹא נִכְחַדּוּ מִבְּנֵיהֶם 4	3	3	3
	לְדֹר אַחֲרוֹן	2	2	2
	מִסִּפְרֵים תְּהִלֹּת יְהוָה [^] 5	3	3	3
	וַעֲזֹזוּ וַנִּפְלְאוּתָיו אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה:	4	4	4
	Strophe 2 Total, v. 3-4	18 = 11 + 7 = 0 + 18		
	Total, v. 1-4	32 = 17 + 15 = 2 + 32		
5	וַיִּקַּם עֲדֹתָו בְּיַעֲקֹב 6	3	3	3
	וַתִּזְרַח שָׁם בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל 5	3	3	3
	אֲשֶׁר צָנָה אֶת-אֲבוֹתֵינוּ [^] 7	4	4	4
	לְהוֹדִיעֵם לְבְנֵיהֶם:	2		2
6	לְמַעַן יִדְעוּ הַדֹּר אַחֲרוֹן 8	4	4	4
	בָּנִים וַיְלָדוּ [^]	2	2	2
	יִקְמוּ וַיִּסְפְּרוּ לְבְנֵיהֶם:	3	3	3
	Strophe 3 Total, v. 5-6	21 = 16 + 5 = 0 + 21		
7	וַיִּשְׁמֹו בְּאֱלֹהִים פֶּסֶלָם 9	3	3	3
	וְלֹא יִשְׁכַּחוּ מֵעַלְלֵי-אֱלֹהִים [^]	4	4	4
	וּמִצֹּתָיו יִנָּצְרוּ:	2		2
8	וְלֹא יִהְיוּ כְּאֲבוֹתָם 10	3	3	3
	דֹר סוֹרֵר וּמִרְהָ	3	3	3
	דֹר לֹא-הִכִּין לְבוֹ [^] 11	4	4	4
	וְלֹא-נִאֲמְנָה אֶת-אֱלֹהִים ² רוּחוֹ:	5	5	5
	Strophe 4 Total, v. 7-8	24 = 17 + 7 = 0 + 24		
	Canto I Total, v. 1-8	77 = 50 + 27 = 0 + 77		
9	בְּנֵי-אֲפֹרִים נוֹשְׁקֵי רוּמֵי-קִשְׁתָּ [^] 12	5	5	5
	הַפְּכוּ בָיוֹם קָרֵב:	3		3
10	לֹא שָׁמְרוּ בְרִית אֱלֹהִים [^] 13	4	4	4
	וּבַתּוֹרָתוֹ מֵאֲנֹו לְלִבָּת:	3		3
11	וַיִּשְׁכַּחוּ עַל־לוֹתָיו [^] 14	2	2	2
	וַנִּפְלְאוּתָיו אֲשֶׁר הִרְאָם:	3	3	3
	Strophe 5 Total, v. 9-11	20 = 11 + 9 = 20 + 0		
	Total, v. 7-11	44 = 28 + 16 = 20 + 24		
12	נִגַּד אֲבוֹתָם עָשָׂה פֶּלֶא [^] 15	4	4	4
	בְּאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם שְׂדֵה-צֹעַן:	4		4
13	בְּקַעֲיִם וַיַּעֲבִירָם [^] 16	3	3	3
	וַיַּצֵּב-מַיִם כְּמוֹ-נָד:	4		4
14	וַיִּנְתֵּם בְּעֵינֵי יוֹמָם [^] 17	3	3	3
	וְכָל-הַלַּיְלָה בְּאוֹר אֵשׁ:	4	4	4
	Strophe 6 Total, v. 12-14	22 = 10 + 12 = 22 + 0		

15	יִבְקַע צָרִים בַּמִּדְבָּרָא [^] 18	3	3	3
	וַיִּשְׁקַ כְּתוּהֶמוֹת רַבָּה:	3		3
16	וַיּוֹצֵא נוֹזְלִים מִסְּלַע [^] 19	3	3	3
	וַיּוֹרֵד כְּנֻהָרוֹת מַיִם:	3	3	3
	Strophe 7 Total, v. 15-16	<u>12 = 6 + 6 = 12 + 0</u>		
	Total, v. 12-16	<u>34 = 16 + 18 = 34 + 0</u>		
	Canticle II.1.1 v. 9-16	54 = 27 + 27 = 54 + 0		
17	וַיּוֹסִיפוּ עוֹד לַחֲטֹא־לוֹ [^] 20	4	4	4
	לַמְרוֹת עֲלִיּוֹן בְּצִיָּה:	3		3
18	וַיִּנְסוּ־אֱלֹ ³ בְּלִבְכֶם [^] 21	3	3	3
	לְשֹׂא־אֶכֶל לְנִפְשָׁם:	3		3
19	וַיִּדְבְּרוּ בְּאֱלֹהִים אָמְרוּ 22	2	2	2
	הַיּוֹכֵל אֱלֹ ⁴ :	3	3	3
	לְעֶרְדֹּ שְׁלֶחַן בַּמִּדְבָּר:	3		3
	Strophe 8 Total, v. 17-19	<u>21 = 12 + 9 = 21 + 0</u>		
20	הֵן הִכָּה־צוּרוֹ וַיִּנּוּבוּ מַיִם 23	5	5	5
	וַנְחָלִים יִשְׁטַפוּ	2	2	2
	הַגַּם־לָחֶם יוֹכֵל תִּתֵּן 24	4	4	4
	אִם־יָכִין שְׂאֵר לְעַמּוֹ:	4		4
	Strophe 9 Total, v. 20	<u>15 = 11 + 4 = 15 + 0</u>		
21	לָכֵן שָׁמַע יְהוָה וַיִּתְעַבֵּר 25	4	4	4
	וְאִשׁ נִשְׁקָה בְּיַעֲקֹב [^]	3	3	3
	וְגַם־אֶפֶס עָלָה בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל:	4		4
22	כִּי לֹא הֵאֱמִינוּ בְּאֱלֹהִים [^] 26	4	4	4
	וְלֹא בִטְחוּ בִישׁוּעֵתוֹ:	3		3
	Strophe 10 Total, v. 21-22	<u>18 = 11 + 7 = 18 + 0</u>		
	Canticle II.1.2 v. 17-22	<u>54 = 34 + 20 = 54 + 0</u>		
	Sub-canto II.1 v. 9-22	108 = 61 + 47 = 108 + 0		
23	וַיִּצְוּ שְׁחַקִּים מִמַּעַל [^] 27	3	3	3
	וַדַּלְתִּי שְׁמַיִם פָּתַח:	3		3
[24] Middle verseline	וַיִּמְטֵר עֲלֵיכֶם מִן הַשָּׁמַיִם 28	4	4	4
Canto II (33 = 16 + [1] + 16)	וַיִּדְבְּרוּ־שְׁמַיִם נִתְּנָן לָמוֹ:	4		4
25	לָחֶם אֲבִירִים אֶכֶל אִישׁ [^] 29	4	4	4
	צִיָּדָה שְׁלַח לָתֶם לְשִׁבְעַ:	4		4
	Strophe 11 Total, v. 23-25	<u>22 = 11 + 11 = 22 + 0</u>		
26	וַיִּסַּע קָדִים בְּשָׁמַיִם [^] 30	3	3	3
	וַיִּנְהַג בְּעֵזוֹ תִימָן:	3		3
27	וַיִּמְטֵר עֲלֵיכֶם כַּעֲפַר שְׂאֵר [^] 31	4	4	4
	וַיִּכְחֹל יָמִים עוֹף כְּנָף:	4		4
28	וַיִּפֹּל בְּקֶרֶב מַחְנֵהוּ [^] 32	3	3	3
	סָבִיב לְמִשְׁפַּנְתּוֹ:	2		2
	Strophe 12 Total, v. 26-28	<u>19 = 10 + 9 = 19 + 0</u>		

29	וַיֹּאכְלוּ וַיִּשְׂבְּעוּ מֵאֲדָרָא וּתְאֻמֹתֵם יָבֵא לָהֶם:	33	3	3	3	3
30	לֹא־זָרוּ מִתְאֻמֹתֵם עוֹד אֶקְלֵם בְּפִיהֶם:	34	3	3	3	3
31	וַאֲף־אֱלֹהִים׀ עָלָה בָהֶם וַיִּהְרַג בְּמִשְׁמַנֵיהֶם וּבְחֹרְרֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל הַכְרִיעַ:	35	4	4	4	4
			2	2	2	2
			3	3	3	3
	Strophe 13 Total, v. 29-31		<u>21</u>	= 12	+ 9	= 21 + 0
	Canticle II.2.1 v. 23-31		<u>62</u>	= 33	+ 29	= 62 + 0
32	בְּכָל־זֹאת חָטְאוּ־עוֹד וְלֹא־הֵאֱמִינוּ בְּנִפְלְאוֹתָיו:	36	4	4	4	4
33	וַיְכַל־בְּהֶבֶל יְמֵיהֶם וּשְׁנוֹתָם בְּבִהְלָה:	37	3	3	3	3
			2	2	2	2
	Strophe 14 Total, v. 32-33		<u>12</u>	= 7	+ 5	= 12 + 0
34	אִם־הֲרַגְם וּדְרָשׁוּהוּ וְשָׁבוּ וְשִׁחְרוּ־אֵל ⁵ :	38	3	3	3	3
	(528 = 259 + 10 + 259)		3	3	3	3
	35 Meaningful centre וַיִּזְכְּרוּ בִּי־אֱלֹתֵימָם צוּרָם Middle verseline (38+1+38): וְאֵלֶּם ⁶ עֲלִיוֹן	39	4	4	4	4
			3	3	3	3
	Strophe 15 Total, v. 34-35		<u>13</u>	= 7	+ 6	= 13 + 0
36	וַיִּפְתְּוּהוּ בְּפִיהֶם וּבְלִשׁוֹנָם יְכַבְּרוּ־לוֹ:	40	2	2	2	2
37	וְלִבָּם לֹא־נִכְוֶן עֲמֹו וְלֹא נֶאֱמְנוּ בְּבְרִיתוֹ:	41	4	4	4	4
			3	3	3	3
	Strophe 16 Total, v. 36-37		<u>12</u>	= 6	+ 6	= 12 + 0
38	וְהוּא רַחוּם׀ יַכְפֹּר עוֹן וְלֹא־יִשְׁחִית	42	4	4	4	4
			2	2	2	2
	וְהִרְבֵּה לְהַשִּׁיב אִפְו וְלֹא־יַעִיר כָּל־חַמַּתּוֹ:	43	3	3	3	3
			4	4	4	4
39	וַיִּזְכֹּר בִּי־בְשֵׁר הַמָּדָה רוּחַ הַזֵּלֶף וְלֹא יָשׁוּב:	44	4	4	4	4
			4	4	4	4
	Strophe 17 Total, v. 38-39		<u>21</u>	= 13	+ 8	= 21 + 0
	Canticle II.2.2 v. 32-39		<u>58</u>	= 33	+ 25	= 58 + 0
	Canto II Total, v. 9-39		<u>228</u>	= 127	+ 101	= 228 + 0
40	כַּמָּה יִמְרוּהוּ בַמֶּדְבָּרָא יַעֲצִיבוּהוּ בִישִׁימוֹן:	45	3	3	3	3
41	וַיִּשׁוּבוּ וַיִּנְסוּ־אֵל ⁷ וַקְדוּשׁ יִשְׂרָאֵל הַתּוֹי:	46	3	3	3	3
			3	3	3	3
	Strophe 18 Total, v. 40-41		<u>11</u>	= 6	+ 5	= 11 + 0
42	לֹא־זָכְרוּ אֶת־יְדוּוּ	47	4	4	4	4

			5	5	5	
43	יֹום אֲשֶׁר־פָּדַם מִנִּי־צָר׃	48	4	4	4	
	אֲשֶׁר־שָׂם בְּמִצְרַיִם אֶת־תְּוִיֹּ		3		3	
	וּמִוִּפְתֵּי בְשָׂדֵה־צֹעַן׃		3	3	3	
44	וַיִּהְיֶה לְדָם יֵאֲרִיקָם׃	49	3	3	3	
	וַנְּזַלֵּיהֶם בַּל־יִשְׁתַּוּוּ׃		3	3	3	
	Strophe 19 Total, v. 42-44		22	= 11 + 11	= 22	+ 0
45	יִשְׁלַח בָּהֶם עֶרֶב וַיֹּאכְלֵם׃	50	4	4	4	
	וּצְפָרְדַּע וַתִּשְׁחִיתֵם׃		2		2	
46	וַיִּתֵּן לְחֹסִיל יְבוּלָם׃	51	3	3	3	
	וַיִּגְיַעַם לְאַרְבָּה׃		2		2	
	Strophe 20 Total, v. 45-46		11	= 7 + 4	= 11	+ 0
47	יִתְרֹג בְּבָרָד גִּפְגָּמָם׃	52	3	3	3	
	וַיִּשְׁקְמוּתָם בְּחֹנְמַל׃		2		2	
48	וַיִּסְגַּר לְבָרָד בְּעִירָם׃	53	3	3	3	
	וּמִקְנֵיהֶם לְרִשְׁפִּים׃		2		2	
	Strophe 21 Total, v. 47-48		10	= 6 + 4	= 10	+ 0
	Canticle III.1.1 v. 40-48		54	= 30 + 24	= 54	+ 0
49	יִשְׁלַח־בָּם׃ חֲרוֹן אַפּוֹ	54	4	4	4	
	עֲבָרָה וְזַעַם וְצָרָה׃		3	3	3	
	מִשְׁלַחַת מִלְּאֲכֵי רַעִים׃		3		3	
50	יִפְלֹס נְתִיב לְאַפּוֹ׃	55	3	3	3	
	לֹא־חֲשַׁךְ מִמְנוֹת נִפְשָׁם׃		4	4	4	
	וַתִּתְּם לְהַבֵּר הַסְּגִיר׃		3		3	
51	וַיַּךְ כָּל־בְּכוֹר בְּמִצְרַיִם׃	56	4	4	4	
	רֹאשֵׁית אוֹנִים בְּאֶהְלֵיהֶם׃		4		4	
	Strophe 22 Total, v. 49-51		28	= 18 + 10	= 28	+ 0
52	וַיִּסַּע כְּצֹאן עֲמוּיֹ	57	3	3	3	
	וַיִּנְהַגְם כְּעֶדֶר בַּמִּדְבָּר׃		3		3	
	Total, v. 40-52		88	= 51 + 37	= 88	+ 0
53	וַיִּנְתְּם לְבֹטֵחַ וְלֹא פִתְרוּ׃	58	4	4	4	
	וְאֶת־אוֹיְבֵיהֶם כִּסָּה תְּהִים׃		4		4	
	Strophe 23 Total, v. 52-53		14	= 7 + 7	= 14	+ 0
54	וַיְבִיאֵם אֶל־גְּבוּל קְדֻשׁוֹ׃	59	4	4	4	
	הַר־זֶה קִנְיַתָּה יְמִינֹ׃		4		4	
55	וַיַּגְרֵשׁ מִפְּנֵיהֶם׃ גּוֹיִם	60	3	3	3	
	וַיִּפְּיֵלֵם בְּתַבַּל נַחֲלָה׃		3	3	3	
	וַיִּשְׁכַּן בְּאֶהְלֵיהֶם שְׁבֹטֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל׃		4		4	
	Strophe 24 Total, v. 54-55		18	= 10 + 8	= 18	+ 0
	Canticle III.1.2 v. 49-55		60	= 35 + 25	= 60	+ 0
	Sub-canto III.1 v. 40-55		114	= 65 + 49	= 114	+ 0

56	Middle vsl.	וַיִּסְנוּ וַיִּמְרוּ אֶת־אֱלֹהִים עֲלִיוֹן [^]	61	5	5	5
		וְעֲרוֹתָיו לֹא שָׁמְרוּ: (33=16+1+16)		3	3	3
57		וַיִּסְנוּ וַיִּבְגְּדוּ כְּאֲבוֹתָם [^]	62	3	3	3
		וַהֲפֹכּוּ כְּקִשְׁתֵּי רַמְיָהּ:		3	3	3
58		וַיִּכְעִסוּהוּ בְּכַמּוֹתָם [^]	63	2	2	2
		וּבִפְסִילֵיהֶם יִקְנִיאוּהוּ:		2	2	2
		Strophe 25 Total, v. 56-58		18	= 10	+ 8 = 18 + 0
59		שָׁמַע אֱלֹהִים וַיִּתְעַבֵּר [^]	64	3	3	3
		וַיִּמְאֵס מְאֹד בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל:		3	3	3
60		וַיִּטֵּשׁ מִשְׁכַּן שְׁלוֹ [^]	65	3	3	3
		אֹהֶל שֶׁבֶן בְּאֶרֶם:		3	3	3
61		וַיִּתֵּן לְשִׁבְי עֲזָו [^]	66	3	3	3
		וַתִּפְאֲרֶתוּ בִּיד־צָר:		3	3	3
		Strophe 26 Total, v. 59-61		18	= 9	+ 9 = 18 + 0
62		וַיִּסְגֵּר לְחֶרֶב עֲמֹו [^]	67	3	3	3
		וּבְנַחֲלָתוֹ הִתְעַבֵּר:		2	2	2
63		בַּחֲוָרָיו אָכַל־הָאִשׁ [^]	68	3	3	3
		וּבְתוֹלָתָיו לֹא הוֹלִלּוּ:		3	3	3
64		כַּהֲנֵיו בְּחֶרֶב נִפְלוּ [^]	69	3	3	3
		וְאֵל־מִנְתָּיו לֹא תִבְכְּיָנָה:		3	3	3
		Strophe 27 Total, v. 62-64		17	= 9	+ 8 = 17 + 0
		Canticle III.2.1 v. 56-64		53	= 28	+ 25 = 53 + 0
65		וַיִּקֶץ כִּישָׁן אֲדָנִי [^]	70	3	3	3
		כְּגִבּוֹר מִתְרוֹגֵן מַיִן:		3	3	3
66		וַיִּד־צָרָיו אֲחֹרָ [^]	71	3	3	3
		חֲרַפְתָּ עוֹלָם נָתַן לָמוֹ:		4	4	4
		Strophe 28 Total, v. 65-66		13	= 6	+ 7 = 13 + 0
67		וַיִּמְאֵס בְּאֹהֶל יוֹסֵף [^]	72	3	3	3
		וּבְשֶׁבֶט אֶפְרַיִם לֹא בָחַר:		4	4	4
68		וַיִּבְחַר אֶת־שֶׁבֶט יְהוּדָה [^]	73	4	4	4
		אֶת־תֵּר צִיּוֹן אֲשֶׁר אָהַב:		5	5	5
69		וַיִּבֶן כְּמוֹ־רַמִּים מִקִּדְשׁוֹ [^]	74	4	4	4
		כְּאֶרֶץ יִסְדָּה לְעוֹלָם:		3	3	3
		Strophe 29 Total, v. 67-69		23	= 11	+ 12 = 23 + 0
70		וַיִּבְחַר בְּדָוִד עֲבָדָיו [^]	75	3	3	3
		וַיִּקְחֵהוּ מִמְּכֹלֵאת צָאן:		3	3	3
71		מֵאַחַר עֲלוֹת הַבִּיאוֹ	76	3	3	3
		לְרַעוֹת בְּיַעֲקֹב עֲמֹו [^]		3	3	3
		וּבְיִשְׂרָאֵל נַחֲלָתוֹ:		2	2	2
72		וַיִּרְעַם כְּתָם לְבָבָיו [^]	77	3	3	3
		וּבְתַבִּינּוֹת כִּפְיוֹ יִנְחָם:		3	3	3

Strophe 30	Total, v. 70-72	20 = 12 + 8 = 20 + 0
Canticle III.2.2	v. 65-72	56 = 29 + 27 = 56 + 0
Sub-canto III.2	v. 56-72	109 = 57 + 52 = 109 + 0
Canto III	Total, v. 40-72	223 = 122 + 101 = 223 + 0
Cantos II-III	Total, v. 9-72	451 = 249 + 202 = 451 + 0
	Total, v. 1-72	528 = 299 + 229 = 451 + 77
Total, including the heading, v. 1-72		530 = 301 + 229

Observations

1. In terms of the 528 words of the psalm, the arithmetic centre is constituted by the **10** words in vs. 34-35a ($528 = 259 + 10 + 259$). Though these words are in themselves meaningful, they do not constitute the consciously designed meaningful centre. A better candidate is to be found on verseline level, since the verseline appears to be the primary compositional building block of the psalm (see Observation 4 below). Moreover, as I shall demonstrate below, Psalm 78 has distinct meaningful centres on verseline level in each of its three cantos. Therefore, there is every reason to look for the meaningful centre of the entire psalm on the level of its **77** verselines. The middle verseline is the **7**-word **verse 35** ($38 + 1 + 38$):

וַיִּזְכְּרוּ כִּי־אֱלֹהִים צוּרָם ^ וְאֵל עֲלִיּוֹן גָּאֲלָם:

[They remembered that God was their rock / and that God Most High redeemed them.](#)

These **7** words express the quintessence of the salutary lessons to be drawn from Israel's history according to this didactic poem. In terms of content, the meaningful centre of Psalm 78 is very reminiscent of that of Psalm 77 (v. 12): "I will call to mind the deeds of YHWH; yes, I will remember your wonders of old", which demonstrates the close connection between the two psalms.

The pivotal position of **v. 35** as the central verseline is not only underscored by the middle words overlapping it in **v. 35a**, but also by the fact that **v. 35a** happens to be the pivotal colon ($163 = 81 + 1 + 81$). Additionally, the middle occurrence of the 3 instances of **עֲלִיּוֹן**, 'Most High' (vs. 17, **35**, and 56) falls precisely within **v. 35**. In their turn, these 3 instances constitute the arithmetic middle of the **7** occurrences of **עֲלִיּוֹן** in the Asaphite psalms: 73:11, 77:11, **78:17**, **78:35**, **78:56**, 82:6, and 83:19.

In light of the pivotal positioning of the keyword **עֲלִיּוֹן** in Psalm 77 (see Observation 3 in my [Analysis of Psalm 77](#)), there is every reason to assume the deliberate use of this keyword also here to focus attention on the meaningful centre. See the General [Introduction](#), "Special devices to highlight the meaningful centre".

2. A feature Psalm 78 shares with a considerable number of psalms is that it has deliberately designed meaningful centres in other parts of the poem: in each of the three cantos, as has been observed by Pieter van der Lugt (private communication). The middle verseline of **Canto I** (vs. 1-8), **v. 5a-b**, may be regarded as its consciously designed meaningful centre ($11 = 5 + 1 + 5$):

וַיִּקַּם עֲרוּתוֹ בְּיַעֲקֹב וַתּוֹרָה שָׁם בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל

[He laid a solemn charge on Jacob and established a law in Israel.](#)

It is intriguing to find that each of the two 3-word cola is made up of **13** letters, giving **26** in total, which represents the numerical value of the name YHWH.

The middle verseline of **Canto II** (vs. 9-39), **v. 24**, would be a very fitting meaningful centre of this **33-verseline** canto ($33 = 16 + 1 + 16$):

וַיִּמְטֵר עֲלֵיכֶם מֶן הַשָּׁמַיִם לֶחֶם ^ וַיִּדְגֵן אֲשֶׁמִּים נָתַן לָמוֹ:

He rained down manna for them to eat // and gave them the grain of heaven.
 The middle verseline of Canto III (vs. 40-72), v. 56, would be a most appropriate meaningful centre for this canto, which has also **33 verselines** (33 = 16 + 1 + 16):

וַיִּנְסוּ וַיִּמְרוּ אֶת־אֱלֹהֵימָּוּן ^ וְעֲדוּתָיו לֹא שָׁמְרוּ:

Yet they provoked and defied God Most High // and did not observe his charges.

Read together in succession, the three extra meaningful centres express the crucial factors in the relationship between YHWH and the people of Israel, highlighting them as containing together the leading theme of the psalm:

- YHWH gave them the law as the **solemn charge** laid on them (v. 5a-b),
- YHWH gave them food from heaven in plenty in the desert (v. 24),
- Yet they provoked God **Most High**, refusing to keep his **solemn charges** (v. 56).

The keyword **עֲדוּת**, ‘solemn charge, obligatory decree’, occurs only here in the psalm as a whole, where the two instances function as a device for inclusion to link the two meaningful centres. In the same way, the keyword **עֲלִיוֹן**, ‘Most High’, in the third centre serves to connect it to the meaningful centre of the psalm as a whole, v. 35, where we find the pivotal instance of this important keyword in the Asaphite psalms.

3. Particularly interesting to note is that Psalm 78 is positioned exactly at the centre of the **11** Asaphite psalms of Book III.* Its central positioning is strongly emphasized by the fact that the middle occurrence of the **7** instances of **עֲלִיוֹן** in the **11** Asaphite psalms is to be found precisely in Ps. 78:35! It features in 73:11, 77:11, 78:17, **78:35**, 78:56, 82:6, and 83:19. For its significance, see the [Introduction to Book III](#).

In light of this, it is not surprising to find that the middle canticle (coinciding with the 4 middle strophes), **vs. 32-39**, in which the meaningful centre is positioned, is made up of **58** words. This number represents the numerical value of **עֲלִיוֹן** (16+12+10+6+14). For the use of the gematric value of a keyword as a structuring device, see the [General Introduction](#), pp. 13-14.

4. The psalm divides into an introductory canto, followed by 8 canticles divided over 2 cantos with 4 sub-cantos:

vs. 1-8	Canto I	4 strophes	11 verselines
vs. 9-16	Canticle II.1.1	3 strophes	8 verselines
vs. 17-22	Canticle II.1.2 13	3 strophes	7 verselines
vs. 23-31	Canticle II.2.1	3 strophes	33 9 verselines
vs. 32-39	Canticle II.2.2	4 strophes	9 verselines
vs. 40-48	Canticle III.1.1	4 strophes	9 verselines
vs. 49-55	Canticle III.1.2 13	3 strophes	7 verselines
vs. 56-64	Canticle III.2.1	3 strophes	33 9 verselines
vs. 65-72	Canticle III.2.2	3 strophes	8 verselines
vs. 9-72	Cantos II-III	26 strophes	66 verselines
vs. 1-72	Cantos I-III	30 strophes	77 verselines

* First observed, as far as I know, by Beat Weber, *Psalm 77 und sein Umfeld. Eine poetologische Studie* (Bonner Biblische Beiträge 103), Weinheim: Beltz Athenäum, 1995. See now also his contribution “Der Asaph-Psalter – eine Skizze”, in: B. Huwyler, e.a. (eds.), *Prophetie und Psalmen*, (FS K. Seybold, AOAT 280), Münster 2001, pp. 117-141, especially pp. 134ff.

The cantos, canticles, strophes, and verselines appear to be the main building blocks employed by the author to shape the text into this particularly regular structure. On strophic level, Cantos II and III divide into **13** strophes each to generate the divine name number **26**. The four sub-cantos have two canticles each, arranged in a chiasmic pattern on strophic level: $6 + 7$ and $7 + 6 = 26$.

Viewed from the heart of the psalm as a whole, the middle canticle, [vs. 32-39](#), we get the following pattern:

vs. 1-31	13 strophes
vs. 32-39	4 strophes
vs. 40-72	13 strophes.

The pivotal position of the central canticle is highlighted by the fact that it is surrounded by $13 + 13 = 26$ strophes.

On verseline level, the two main cantos divide into **33** (3×11) verselines each. And since Canto I is made up of **11** verselines, the psalm has **77** (7×11) verselines. This shows the crucial role played by the number **11** as structuring principle in Psalm 78. For the structural use of **11** and its significance as the number of fulfilment, see my book *Numerical Secrets of the Bible*, pp. 57-66 and 70-73. See also the Special Features of [Judges 5:2-31b](#), which is conspicuously structured by the number **11**.

For the paramount importance, from a logotechnical point of view, of the verseline as building block, see the [Introduction to Book I](#): Table II, the [Introduction to Book II](#): Table VI, and the [Introduction to Book III](#): Table X.

Note the following occurrences of the number **11** or its multiples, apart from those already mentioned:

vs. 7-11	44 words
vs. 12-14	22 words
vs. 23-25	22 words, with 11 before, and 11 after <i>atnach</i>
vs. 40-41	11 words
vs. 42-44	22 words, with 11 before, and 11 after <i>atnach</i>
vs. 45-46	11 words
vs. 40-52	88 words
vs. 56-66	66 words in these 11 verses
vs. 9-72	451 (41×11) words
vs. 1-72	528 (48×11) words.

- As noted in the Analysis of Psalm 77 (Observation 5), the concluding strophe, vs. 70-72, dealing with David as YHWH's shepherd of his people, is clearly precluded in the coda of Psalm 77. (This is additional evidence for the interrelationship between Psalms 77 and 78.) Moreover, the **14** words of the first strophe of Psalm 78, vs. 1-2, may have been deliberately chosen to allude to David, whose name has the gematric value of **14** ($4 + 6 + 4$). This may also apply to the **56** (4×14) words in the concluding canticle, vs. 65-72. For the significance of the number **14** alluding to David, see my analysis of the very first Davidic psalm, [Psalm 3](#).
- There is no sign of any attempt by the author to underscore the structure of the text and the final compositional formula on word level with the help of the divine name numbers. Seeing the size of Psalm 78, there are relatively few occurrences, of which some may simply be a matter of coincidence:

vs. 2-4 **17** words before atnach
 vs. 7-8 **17** words before atnach
 vs. 12-16 **34** (2 x **17**) words in total
 vs. 20-21 **26** words in total
 vs. 17-22 **34** (2 x **17**) words before atnach
 vs. 32-37 **17** words after atnach
 vs. 40-51 **34** (2 x **17**) words after atnach
 vs. 52-55 **17** words before atnach
 vs. 53-55 **26** words in total
 vs. 62-64 **17** words in total
 vs. 56-72 **52** (2 x **26**) after atnach.

7. The important keyword, the divine title עֶלְיוֹן, 'Most High', occurs 3x (vs. 17, 35, 56). The name יהוה occurs **2x** (4 and 21), the designation אֱל no less than **7x** (vs. 7, 8, 18, 19, 34, 35, 41), and אֱלֹהִים even **8x** (vs. 7, 10, 19, 22, 31, 35, 56, 59), giving altogether **17** references to God by means of the three main designations. This may be the reason why אֱדֹנָי is used in v. 65.

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