

Psalm 84— 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 84

- Psalm 84 is the first of four Korahite psalms in Book III (84, 85, 87 and 88) arranged in two pairs around the single Davidic Psalm 86.
- The **108** words of the psalm represent the numerical value of the word **מִשְׁכְּנֹתַיִךְ**, ‘your dwelling place’, in v. 2a. In light of the contents, it is evidently a keyword of paramount importance. So is **אַשְׁרֵי**, ‘happy’, occurring no less than 3 times – see Observation 2.
- The psalm has a strong numerical framework: a **32**-word central section (vs. 6-9 in box), flanked by 38 words on either side (38 + **32** + 38), which determines the canto structure: vs. 2-5 (Canto I), vs. 6-9 (Canto II), and vs. 10-13 (Canto III).
- The direction of address is used to express the presence of YHWH in the sanctuary, by means of the well-known *kebod*-YHWH formula: 58 = 26 + 32. The **58** words addressed to God (Column c) divide precisely into **26** in Canto I and **32** in Cantos II and III. Note also the **32** words in the middle canto and the fact that the word *kebod*, ‘glory’, occurs in the text (in v. 12a). The *number of fullness* expresses the *fullness* of YHWH’s presence: **7** strophes, **7** verselines in Canto I, **7** occurrences of YHWH and **7** of Elohim.

Strophic structure - Canto/Stanza boundary: ||

- Van der Lugt: 2-3, 4a-d, 4e-5 || 6-8, 9-10, 11-13 (2 cantos with 6 strophes, 15 verselines and 34 cola, taking vs. 11-12 as 2 tricola).
- Fokkelman: 2-3, 4 || 5-6, 7-8 || 9-10, 11, 12-13 (3 stanzas with 7 strophes, 17 verselines and 36 cola, taking vs. 11-12 as 4 bicola).
- Labuschagne: 2-3, 4-5 || 6-7, 8-9 || 10, 11-12, 13 (3 cantos with 7 strophes, 15 verselines and 34 cola, taking v. 13 as a coda, and (with Van der Lugt) vs. 11-12 as 2 tricola).

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.
- The numbering of the verselines is in **brown**.

		Total	a	b	c	d
1	לְמִנְצַחַת עַל־הַגְּתִיתָא לְבְנֵי־קִרְחַת מִזְמוֹר:	6	3	3		
	Heading, v. 1	6 = 3 + 3				
2	מִהַ־יִּדְרֹת מִשְׁכְּנֹתַיִךְ = 108	1	3	3	3	
	יְהִיָּה צְבָאוֹת: (13+21+11+14+6+22+10+11)	2	2		2	
	Total, v. 2	5 = 5 + 0 = 5 + 0				
3*	נִכְסְפָה וְגַם־כָּלְתָה נַפְשִׁי	2	4	4		4
	לְחִצְרוֹת יְהִיָּה	2	2			2
	לְבִי וּבְשָׂרֵי־יִרְגְנוּ	3	3	2	1	3
	אֶל־אֱלֹהֵי:	3		3		3
	Total, v. 3	12 = 8 + 4 = 0 + 12				
	Strophe 1 Total, v. 2-3	17 = 13 + 4 = 5 + 12				

4	Middle words of Canto I (38=17+4+17) and middle verseline (7 = 3 + 1 + 3)	בְּמִצְפּוֹר מְצֹאֵת בַּיִת וְדָרוֹר קָן לָהּ אֲשֶׁר־שָׁתָה אֶפְרָחֶיהָ אֶת־מִזְבְּחוֹתֶיהָ יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת מֶלְכֵנוּ וְאֱלֹהֵינוּ:	4 3 5 2 6 2	4 3 3 2 2 2	4 3 3 2 2 2			
		Total, v. 4				16 = 14 + 2 = 16 + 0		
5		אֲשֶׁר־יֹשְׁבֵי בֵיתָהּ עוֹד יִתְלַלֹּד סֶלָה:	7 2	3 2	3 2			
		Total, v. 5				5 = 3 + 2 = 5 + 0		
	Strophe 2	Total, v. 4-5				21 = 17 + 4 = 21 + 0		
	Canto I	Total, v. 2-5				38 = 30 + 8 = 26 + 12		
6		אֲשֶׁר־יֹשְׁבֵי בֵיתָהּ מְסֻלּוֹת בְּלִבְכֶם:	8 2	5 2	5 2			
		Total, v. 6				7 = 5 + 2 = 7 + 0		
7		עֲבָרֵי בְּעֵמֶק הַכְּבֹא מִעֵינַי יִשִּׁיתוּהוּ גַם־בְּרִכּוֹת יַעֲטָה מוֹרָה:	9 2 4	3 2 4	3 2 4			
		Total, v. 7				9 = 5 + 4 = 0 + 9		
	Strophe 3	Total, v. 6-7				16 = 10 + 6 = 7 + 9		
	First Half	Total, v. 2-7				54 = 40 + 14 = 33 + 21		
		Arithmetic middle: 108 = 54 + 54						
8		יִלְכוּ מִחֵיל אֶל־חֵיל יִרְאֶה אֶל־אֱלֹהִים בְּצִיּוֹן:	10 4	4 4	4 4			
		Total, v. 8				8 = 4 + 4 = 0 + 8		
		Total, v. 7-8				17 = 9 + 8 = 0 + 17		
		Total, v. 5-8				29 = 17 + 12 = 12 + 17		
9		יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים צְבָאוֹת שֹׁמֵעַ תְּפִלָּתֵנוּ הַאֲזִינָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ יַעֲקֹב סֶלָה:	11 2 3	3 2 3	3 2 3			
		Total, v. 9				8 = 5 + 3 = 8 + 0		
	Strophe 4	Total, v. 8-9				16 = 9 + 7 = 8 + 8		
	Central section: Canto II	Total, v. 6-9				32 = 19 + 13 = 15 + 17		

10	Mid. words of Cantos II-III	מִנְנֵנִי רְאֵה אֱלֹהִים [^]	12	3	3	3	
		וְהִבֵּט פָּנָי מִשִּׁיחָהְךָ :		3	3	3	
		70 = 32 + 6 + 32		6	= 3 + 3	= 6 + 0	
		Strophe 5 Total, v. 10		5	5	5	
11		כִּי טוֹב־יוֹם בְּחֻצְרֶיךָ מֵאֶלֶף	13	4	4	4	
		בְּחֻרְתֵי הַסְּתוּפָה בְּבֵית אֱלֹהִים [^]		3	3	3	
		מְדוּר בְּאֶהֱלֵי־רָשָׁע :		12	= 9 + 3	= 5 + 7	
		Total, v. 11		26	= 17 + 9	= 19 + 7	
		Total, v. 9-11		5	5	5	
12		כִּי שָׁמֵשׁ וּמִגֵּן יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים [^]	14	4	4	4	
		חֵן וְכְבוֹד יִתֵּן יְהוָה [^] (20+2+6+4) = 32 כְּבוֹד		5	5	5	
		לֹא יִמְנַע־טוֹב לְהַלְכִים בְּתַמִּים :		14	= 9 + 5	= 0 + 14	
		Total, v. 12		26	= 18 + 8	= 5 + 21	
		Strophe 6 Total, v. 11-12		32	= 21 + 11	= 11 + 21	
		Total, v. 10-12		2	2	2	
13	Coda	יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת [^]	15	4	4	4	
		אֲשֶׁרִי אָדָם בָּטַח בְּךָ :		6	= 2 + 4	= 6 + 0	
		Strophe 7 Total, v. 13		38	= 23 + 15	= 17 + 21	
		Canto III Total, v. 10-13		54	= 32 + 22	= 25 + 29	
		Second Half Total, v. 8-13		63	= 37 + 26	= 25 + 38	
		Total, v. 7-13		70	= 42 + 28	= 32 + 38	
		Cantos II-III Total, v. 6-13		108	= 72 + 36	= 58 + 50	
		Total, v. 2-13		110	= 72 + 38	= 58 + 52	
		With סְלָה (2x), v. 2-13		116	= 75 + 41		
		With the heading and סְלָה (2x), v. 1-13					

* The curious placement of the *atnach* in the middle of a colon (v. 3c) is hard to explain. There seems to be no logotechnical reason, as is the case, e.g., in Psalm 79:11b and 13c – see Observation 1 in my Analysis of Psalm 79.

Observations

1. Since the psalm is specifically devoted to the temple in Jerusalem, it is not surprising to find that it is composed of 108 words, which is the numerical value of מִשְׁכְּנוֹתֶיךָ, 'your dwelling place' (13 + 21 + 11 + 14 + 6 + 22 + 10 + 11 = 108). This word occurs in the first colon of the first verseline of the poem (v. 2a) and may be regarded as a keyword of paramount importance. See the [General Introduction](#), "The numerical value of a keyword in the text".
2. Logotechnically the psalm divides into two equal halves of 54 words each (vs. 2-7 and vs. 8-13). This may simply be a matter of coincidence, for the text clearly divides into three distinct sections (vs. 2-5, 6-9, and 10-13) demarcated by the two *selahs*. The 32-word central section, Canto II, vs. 6-9, has undoubtedly been devised as the meaningful centre. It contains the quintessential idea of the psalm: the happiness and prosperity of those who dwell in YHWH's house, whose strength and trust are in him. No wonder that the keyword אֲשֶׁרִי, 'happy', occurs at the very beginning of Canto III! Its highlighting function is reinforced by the two other occurrences (vs. 5a and 13b). The three occurrences of אֲשֶׁרִי, 'happy', play an important role in the process to round off Psalms 1-89 – see my remarks at the end of the Introduction to [Book III](#).

- The meaningful centre is significantly flanked by **38** words on either side. The use of the envelope technique is reminiscent of the framework of Psalms 77, 80, 81, and 83.

Canto I the **happiness** experienced by *those who visit God's abode* **38**
Canto II the **happiness** experienced by *those who seek God's presence* **32**
Canto III the **happiness** experienced by *those who visit God's abode* **38**.

This obvious symmetrical framework of the canto structure does not coincide with the rhetorical structure proposed by Van der Lugt, or with that of Fokkelman. In my view, the canto structure, with Canto II at the centre, has clearly been designed to reflect the presence of YHWH in the temple through his glory. Note the explicit use of the numerical value of *kabod* (cf. 12b), **32** (20 + 2 + 6 + 4), representing God's presence, to determine the number of words in Canto II. This is a fine example of the compositional form buttressing the content: Canto II deals particularly with the happiness about *YHWH's presence*, while the surrounding Cantos are concerned with the happiness about *YHWH's abode*.

As observed by Van der Lugt, Canto I has its own meaningful centre on word level, *v. 4a*, flanked by **17** words on either side ($38 = 17 + 4 + 17$):

גַּם־צִפּוֹר מְצָאָה בַּיִת Even the sparrow finds a home.

However, since it constitutes the first colon of the central verseline, *v. 4a-b*, the pivot of the 7-verseline menorah pattern, it is more likely that this was consciously designed as the meaningful centre of Canto I:

גַּם־צִפּוֹר מְצָאָה בַּיִת וְדָרְדֹר קֵן לָהּ

Even a bird finds a home and a swallow has her nest.

Like Canto I, Cantos II-III, taken together, have a meaningful centre they share, in this case clearly on word level: the 6 words of *v. 10*, flanked by **32** words on either side ($70 = 32 + 6 + 32$), the *kabod* number signifying Yahweh's presence:

מִגִּנְנוּ רָאָה אֱלֹהִים ^ וְהִבֵּט פָּנָיו מִשִּׁחָדָי:

Look upon our shield, God // And regard the face of your anointed with favour.

- The change in the direction of address is carefully designed to express in its own way the presence of God in the temple. The division of the **58** words directly addressed to God (Column c) represents the *kebod*-YHWH formula: **58** = **26** + **32**, with **26** words in Canto I, and **32** in Cantos II and III. If we include the two *selahs* into the word-count, the number of words spoken about God (Column d) rise to **52** (2 x **26**). This may be simply a matter of coincidence, but it could have been an additional reason for the use of the two *selahs*, apart from their demarcating function.
- The sudden change from words spoken about God to words directly addressed to him in *v. 13* is a clear indication that *v. 13* is a coda. For the coda, see the [General Introduction](#), "The use of a coda as a device for conclusion".

6. The divine name- and *kabod* numbers are woven into the text in the following way:
- | | |
|-----------|---|
| vs. 2-3 | 17 words in total |
| vs. 4-5 | 17 words before atnach |
| vs. 2-5 | 26 words addressed to God (Column c) |
| vs. 7-8 | 17 words in total, spoken about God (Column d) |
| vs. 5-8 | 17 words before atnach |
| vs. 6-9 | 32 words in total in the arithmetic centre of the poem |
| vs. 4-9 | 17 words after atnach |
| vs. 9-11 | 26 words in total, with 17 before atnach |
| vs. 11-12 | 26 words in total |
| vs. 10-13 | 23 words before atnach, 17 words spoken to God (Column c) |
| vs. 8-13 | 32 words before atnach |
| vs. 7-13 | 26 words after atnach |
| vs. 2-13 | 58 words addressed to God, 26 in Canto I and 32 in II-III. |
7. The word אֱלֹהִים occurs once (v. 3d), and זָבַח אֱלֹהִים four times (vs. 2b, 4e, 9a, 13a). In light of the **7** strophes, the **7** verselines of Canto I, the **7** occurrences of the name יהוה, and the **7** occurrences of אֱלֹהִים, may be interpreted as deliberately designed to express the fullness of YHWH's presence in the temple. See Observation 7 in my Analysis of [Psalm 83](#).

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 Dr. C.J. Labuschagne Senior Lecturer in Semitic Languages (retired),
 Brinkhorst 44 University of Pretoria, South Africa
 9751 AT Haren (Gron) and
 The Netherlands Professor of Old Testament (retired),
labuschagne.cj@planet.nl University of Groningen, The Netherlands