

# Psalm 97— Logotechnical Analysis

## Guidelines

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

## Specific features of Psalm 97

- As e.g., in Psalms 85, the text is clearly structured by the direction of address (compare the cognate Psalm 98!):

vs. 1-6	words spoken about God, addressed to a general public
v. 7	words spoken about and words addressed to the 'gods'
vs. 8-9	words addressed to God
vs. 10-12	words spoken about God, addressed to those who love God.

The psalm may be called a sister psalm of Psalm 98 in light of its form and content.

- As is the case in many of the preceding psalms, the meaningful centre is to be found in terms of a poetical building block: more specifically on colon level.

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

- Van der Lugt: 1-3, 4-6 || 7-9, 10-12 (2 cantos with 4 strophes, 12 verselines and 29 cola).
- Fokkelman: Similarly, except that he finds 28 cola, taking v. 9 as a bicolon.
- Labuschagne: 1-4, 5-6, 7 || 8-9 | 10-12. I concur in regards the 12 verselines and 29 cola; however, on the basis of the direction of address, I divide the text into 5 strophes. Because of its totally different material content, I regard v. 7 as a separate strophe: here the 'gods' are spoken about (v. 7a-b), and addressed directly (v. 7c).  
Van der Lugt and Fokkelman both disregard the fact that, due to the change in the direction of address, there is a break in the flow of the text between v. 7 and v. 8.

## Logotechnical analysis

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

		Total	a	b	c	d
1	יְהוָה מִלְּךָ תִּגַּל הָאָרֶץ אֲ יִשְׁמְחוּ אֵיִם רַבִּים:	1 4	4		4	
		3		3	3	
	Total, v. 1	7	= 4	+ 3	= 7	+ 0
2	עָנָן וְעֶרְפֶּל סָבִיבוֹ צְדָקָה וּמִשְׁפָּט מִכּוֹן כְּסֹאוֹ:	2 3	3		3	
		4		4	4	
	Total, v. 2	7	= 3	+ 4	= 7	+ 0
	Total, v. 1-2	14	= 7	+ 7	= 14	+ 0
3	אֵשׁ לְפָנָיו תִּלְדָּה אֲ וּתְלַהֵט סָבִיב צָרִיו:	3 3	3		3	
		3		3	3	
	Total, v. 3	6	= 3	+ 3	= 6	+ 0
	Total, v. 1-3	20	= 10	= 10	= 20	+ 0
4	הָאֵירוֹ בְּרָקָיו תִּבְלֵה אֲ רָאתָה וּתְחַל הָאָרֶץ:	4 3	3		3	
		3		3	3	
	Total, v. 4	6	= 3	+ 3	= 6	+ 0
	Total, v. 3-4	12	= 6	+ 6	= 12	+ 0
	<b>Strophe 1</b> Total, v. 1-4	<b>26</b>	= 13	+ 13	= 26	+ 0

5	הָרִים כְּדוֹנָג נִמְסוּ מִלְפָּנֵי יְהוָה <sup>^</sup> מִלְפָּנֵי אֲדוֹן כָּל־הָאָרֶץ: Total, v. 1-5	5	3	3	3	
			2	2	2	
			4	4	4	
			<hr/>			
			35	= 18	+ 17	= 35 + 0
6	הִגִּידוּ הַשָּׁמַיִם צְדָקוֹ <sup>^</sup> וְרָאוּ כָּל־הָעַמִּים כְּבוֹדוֹ: Strophe 2 Total, v. 5-6 Total, v. 2-6 Total, v. 1-6	6	3	3	3	
			4	4	4	
			<hr/>			
			16	= 8	+ 8	= 16 + 0
			<hr/>			
			35	= 17	+ 18	= 35 + 0
			<hr/>			
			42	= 21	+ 21	= 42 + 0
7 Middle 3 cola: 29 = 13 + 3 + 13 Meaningful centre 95 = 42 + 10 + 43 off-centre middle 10 words	יִבְשׂוּ כָּל־עֲבָדֵי פֶסֶל הַמִּתְהַלְלִים בְּאֱלִילִים <sup>^</sup> הַשִּׁתְּחוֹלוֹ כָּל־אֱלֹהִים: Strophe 3 Total, v. 7 Total, v. 5-7 Canto I Total, v. 1-7	7	4	4	4	
			2	2	2	
			4	4	4	
			<hr/>			
			10	= 6	+ 4	= 10 + 0
			<hr/>			
			26	= 14	+ 12	= 26 + 0
			<hr/>			
			52	= 27	+ 25	= 52 + 0
8	שָׁמְעָה וַתִּשְׂמַח צִיּוֹן וַתִּגְלָגֶל בְּגוֹת יְהוּדָה <sup>^</sup> לְמַעַן מִשְׁפָּטֶיךָ יְהוָה: Total, v. 8 Total, v. 6-8	8	3	3	3	
			3	3	3	
			3	3	3	
			<hr/>			
			9	= 6	+ 3	= 0 + 9
			<hr/>			
			26	= 15	+ 11	= 17 + 9
9	כִּי־אַתָּה יְהוָה עָלִיוֹן עַל־כָּל־הָאָרֶץ <sup>^</sup> מְאֹד נִעְלִיתָ עַל־כָּל־אֱלֹהִים: Total, v. 9 Canticle II.1 Strophe 4 Total, v. 8-9	9	3	3	3	
			4	4	4	
			5	5	5	
			<hr/>			
			12	= 7	+ 5	= 0 + 12
			<hr/>			
			21	= 13	+ 8	= 0 + 21
10*	אֲהַבֵּי יְהוָה שְׂנֵאוֹ רַע שֹׁמֵר נַפְשׁוֹת חַסִּידָיו <sup>^</sup> מִיַּד רָשָׁעִים וַצִּילָם: Total, v. 10 Total, v. 5-10	10	4	4	4	
			3	3	3	
			3	3	3	
			<hr/>			
			10	= 7	+ 3	= 10 + 0
			<hr/>			
			57	= 34	+ 23	= 36 + 21
11	אֹר זָרַע לְצַדִּיק <sup>^</sup> וּלְיִשְׂרָאֵל לִב שְׂמֹחָה: Total, v. 11	11	3	3	3	
			3	3	3	
			<hr/>			
			6	= 3	+ 3	= 6 + 0
12	שִׁמְחוּ צַדִּיקִים בֵּיתְהוָה <sup>^</sup> וְהוֹדוּ לְזִכָּר קִדְשׁוֹ: Total, v. 12 Canticle II.2 Strophe 5 Total, v. 10-12 Canto II Total, v. 8-12 Numerical Total, v. 1-6 Chiasmus Total, v. 7-12 Total, v. 1-12	12	3	3	3	
			3	3	3	0
			<hr/>			
			6	= 3	+ 3	= 6 + 0
			<hr/>			
			22	= 13	+ 9	= 22 + 0
			<hr/>			
			43	= 26	+ 17	= 22 + 21
			<hr/>			
			42	= 21	+ 21	= 42 + 0
			<hr/>			
			53	= 32	+ 21	= 32 + 21
			<hr/>			
			95	= 53	+ 42	= 74 + 21

\* In v. 10a I side with many scholars following the suggestion in *BHS* to read אֲהַבֵּי 'YHWH loves', (paralleled by the participle שֹׁמֵר in 10b), instead of אֲהַבֵּי 'those who love YHWH' (a matter of dittography). As for the verb שְׂנֵאוֹ in MT, however, there is every reason to read the word as a participle: שְׂנֵאוֹ 'those who hate (evil)'. A moralizing appeal to the just (cf. v. 12a) to hate evil would be completely out of place.

## Observations

1. The arithmetic centre, in terms of the 29 cola, is constituted by the middle three cola of v. 7 (29 = 13 + 3 + 13) coinciding with the middle strophe. This statement about the abashment of the worshippers of worthless idols, which is explicitly addressed to the idols, can be regarded as the meaningful centre of the psalm:

יִבְשׁוּ כָּל-עֲבָדֵי פֶסֶל הַמִּתְהַלְּלִים בְּאֱלִילִים ^ הַשְׁתַּחֲוּוּ-לוֹ כָּל-אֱלֹהִים:

All worshippers of images are put to shame, who make their boast in worthless idols;  
all you gods, bow down before him!

On word level, the 10 words of the three pivotal cola form an off-centre arithmetic pivot (95 = 42 + 10 + 43), which supports the meaningful centre on colon level.

2. The key to understanding the structure of the text is the direction of address, in combination with the numerical aspects:

vs. 1-4	Strophe 1	words <i>about God</i> , addressed to a general public	26 +
vs. 5-6	Strophe 2	words <i>about God</i> , addressed to a general public	16 = 42
v. 7	Strophe 3	words spoken about and addressed to the 'gods'	10
vs. 8-9	Strophe 4	words directly addressed to God	21 +
vs. 10-12	Strophe 5	words <i>about God</i> , addressed to the just	22 = 43

Due to the change in the direction of address in the 52 words of vs. 1-7 spoken *about God*, there is a minor break between vs. 1-6 and 7 (the numerical chiasmus accentuates the unity of vs. 1-6 and 7-12). The abrupt switch to words directly addressed to God (vs. 8-9), however, causes a more important break: between vs. 7 and 8. This major caesura is disregarded by both Van der Lugt and Fokkelman.

3. The two divine name numbers 17 and 26 occur together in the striking compositional formula of Canto II (vs. 8-12) based on the atnach: 43 = 26a + 17b. Compare Observation 2 in my Analysis of [Psalm 98](#)!
4. Additionally, the two divine name numbers feature in the following instances:
 

vs. 1-4	26 words in total, with 17 before atnach
vs. 1-5	17 words after atnach
vs. 2-6	17 words before atnach
vs. 5-7	26 words in total
vs. 6-8	26 words in total, with 15 before and 11 after atnach
vs. 5-10	34 (2 x 17) words before atnach.
5. The number of fullness, 7, occurs of rather frequently:
 

vs. 1 and 2	7 words each
vs. 2-6	35 (5 x 7) words
vs. 1-6	42 (6 x 7), with 21 before and 21 after atnach
vs. 8-9	21 words addressed to God
vs. 1-12	42 words after atnach.
6. The name יהוה appears 6 times (vs. 1a, 5b, 8c, 9a, 10a and 12a). Together with the 11 occurrences in Psalm 96, we count 17 instances of the *holy* name in the two psalms (compare 97:12b!). Note that Psalms 98-100 also have 17 occurrences of the divine name! Compare Observation 3 in my Analysis of [Psalm 98](#). For the altogether 104 (4 x 26) occurrences in Book IV, see Table XIII in the [Introduction to Book IV](#).

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