

Psalm 111— Logotechnical Analysis

Guidelines

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

Specific features of Psalm 111

- This psalm and its sister poem, Psalm 112, are perfect alphabetic acrostics with a very regular structure: 3 cantos, 7 strophes, 10 verselines and 22 cola.
- Taken together, as Van der Lugt has observed, they have a common mathematical centre on word level (112:1a): $72 + 5 + 72 = 149$ words: אֲשֶׁר־אִישׁ יִרָא אֶת־יְהוָה 'Blessed is the man who fears YHWH'. In this respect, the relationship between Psalms 111 and 112 is strikingly similar to that of Psalms 9 and 10, where the 7 words of Psalm 10:1 constitute their common mathematical centre, with 156 (6 x 26) words on either side: $156 + 7 + 156 = 319$. See my analysis of [Psalm 9-10](#).
- Both psalms can be outlined in a menorah pattern, having the middle strophe as their meaningful centre, which coincides with the middle 2 cola with initial *kaph* and *lamedh*. In both psalms a significant alliteration highlights their individual meaningful centre.
- The central sections of both psalms – the middle canto – are enveloped by a 39-word framework. They share this numerical feature with Psalm 113. Another feature they share with Psalm 113 is that they are all provided with *hallelu-yah* at the top.

Strophic structure - Canto/Stanza boundary: ||

- Van der Lugt: 1-2, 3-4 || 5-6, 7-8 || 9-10 (3 cantos, 5 strophes, 10 verselines, 22 cola).
- Fokkelman: 1-3, 4-6 || 7-8, 9-10 (2 stanzas, 4 strophes with 9 verselines and 22 cola; he regards vs. 4-6 as *two* tricollic verselines instead of *three* bicolic lines).
- Labuschagne: 1, 2-3 || 4-5, 6, 7-8 || 9, 10 (3 cantos with 7 strophes in a menorah pattern, 10 verselines and 22 cola, exactly as in Psalm 112).

Logotechnical analysis

- Columns **a** and **b** show the number of words before and after the atnach.
- Column **c**: words describing YHWH's works in general.
- Column **d**: words describing YHWH's miraculous acts for Israel in particular.
- The numbering of the verselines is shown in **brown**.

		Total	a	b	c	d
1	הִלְלוּ יְהוָה	2 = 2 + 0				
	א אֲזַדְדָה יְהוָה בְּכָל־לִבְבִי	4	4		4	
	ב בְּסוּד יִשְׂרָאֵל וְעַדָּה:	3		3	3	
	Strophe 1 Total, v. 1	7 = 4 + 3 = 7 + 0				
2	ג גְּדֹלִים מַעֲשֵׂי יְהוָה	3	3		3	
	ד דְּרוֹשִׁים לְכָל־חַפְצֵיהֶם:	3		3	3	
	Total, v. 2	6 = 3 + 3 = 6 + 0				
	Total, v. 1-2	13 = 7 + 6 = 13 + 0				
3	ה הוֹדִי וְהִדְרִי פִּעְלוֹי	3	3		3	
	ו וְצִדְקָתוֹ עִמָּדַת לְעַד:	3		3	3	
	Total, v. 3	6 = 3 + 3 = 6 + 0				
	Strophe 2 Total, v. 2-3	12 = 6 + 6 = 12 + 0				
	Canto I Total, v. 1-3	19 = 10 + 9 = 19 + 0				

4		זכר עֲשֵׂה לְנַפְלְאֵתֵינוּ	ז	4	3	3	3
		חֲנוּן וְרַחוּם יְהוָה:	ח		3	3	3
		Total, v. 4			6	= 3 + 3	= 0 + 6
5		טָרַף נֶתַן לִירְאָיו	ט	5	3	3	3
		יִזְכֵּר לְעוֹלָם בְּרִיתוֹ:	י		3	3	3
		Total, v. 5			6	= 3 + 3	= 0 + 6
		Strophe 3 Total, v. 4-5			12	= 6 + 6	= 0 + 12
6	Middle cola: 10=2+10	כָּחַ מַעֲשָׂיו הִגִּיד לְעַמּוֹ	כ	6	4	4	4
	Middle words: 33+6+33	לָתֵת לָהֶם נַחֲלַת גּוֹיִם:	ל		4	4	4
	Middle Strophe: 3+1+3	Strophe 4 Total, v. 6			8	= 4 + 4	= 0 + 8
	Note the alliterating <i>lamedh</i>	Total, v. 5-6			14	= 7 + 7	= 0 + 14
		Total, v. 1-6			39	= 20 + 19	= 19 + 20
7		מַעֲשֵׂי יָדָיו אָמֵת וּמִשְׁפָּטֵי	מ	7	4	4	4
		נֶאֱמָנִים כָּל־פְּקוּדָיו:	נ		3	3	3
		Total, v. 7			7	= 4 + 3	= 0 + 7
8		סְמוּכִים לְעַד לְעוֹלָם	ס	8	3	3	3
		עֲשׂוּיִם בְּאֵמֶת וַיִּשֶׁר:	ע		3	3	3
		Total, v. 8			6	= 3 + 3	= 0 + 6
		Strophe 5 Total, v. 7-8			13	= 7 + 6	= 0 + 13
	The Core	Canto II Total, v. 4-8			33	= 17 + 16	= 0 + 33
		Total, v. 1-8			52	= 27 + 25	= 19 + 33
9		פָּדוּת שָׁלַח לְעַמּוֹ	פ	9	3	3	3
		צָוָה לְעוֹלָם בְּרִיתוֹ	צ		3	3	3
		קָדוֹשׁ וְנוֹרָא שְׁמוֹ:	ק		3	3	3
		Strophe 6 Total, v. 9			9	= 6 + 3	= 9 + 0
10	Coda	רֵאשִׁית חֲכֻמָּה יִרְאֵת יְהוָה	ר	10	4	4	4
		שָׂכַל טוֹב לְכָל־עֲשִׂיהֶם	ש		4	4	4
		תְּהַלְתּוּ עֲמֻדַת לְעַד:	ת		3	3	3
		Strophe 7 Total, v. 10			11	= 8 + 3	= 11 + 0
		Canto III Total, v. 9-10			20	= 14 + 6	= 20 + 0
		Total, v. 7-10			33	= 21 + 12	= 20 + 13
		Total, v. 1-10			72	= 41 + 31	= 39 + 33
		Including הַלְלוּ יְהוָה Total, v. 1-10			74	= 43 + 31	

Observations

- The six middle words in v. 6b, **הִגִּיד לְעַמּוֹ ^ לָתֵת לָהֶם נַחֲלַת גּוֹיִם**, 'he demonstrated to his people // giving them the land of the nations', (72 = 35 + 2 + 35), may constitute a meaningful centre (72 = 33 + 6 + 33), but since the phrase is incomplete, the real meaningful centre is to be found on colon level, v. 6 (22 = 10 + 2 + 10):

כָּחַ מַעֲשָׂיו הִגִּיד לְעַמּוֹ ^ לָתֵת לָהֶם נַחֲלַת גּוֹיִם:

His powerful works he demonstrated to his people // giving them the land of the nations.

The two middle cola coincide with the middle strophe (7 = 3 + 1 + 3), exactly at the middle of the alphabet: the two cola with initial **כ** and **ל**. For the meaningful centre of the alphabetic acrostics, see the [General Introduction](#), "The alphabetic acrostics".

Note the four successive alliterating *lamedhs* in v. 6, which recall the five alliterating *lamedhs* in the meaningful centre of [Psalm 112](#) (v. 6). Compare also the five alliterating *kaphs* in the centre of Psalm 37 (37:20) – see Observation 1 in my Analysis of [Psalm 37](#).

Christensen's strophic structure (vs. 1, 2-3, 4-5, **6**, 7-8, 9-10a, 10bc) reveals a perfectly concentric arrangement of the letters of the alphabet: **2 + 4 + 4 + 2 + 4 + 4 + 2**. The menorah pattern proposed by him differs slightly from mine, because, on syntactical grounds, I do not split v. 10a and 10b. The same holds true for the pattern in Psalm 112 - see Observation 2 in my Analysis of [Psalm 112](#).

2. In addition to the pivotal meaningful centre, the psalm also has a distinct larger core enveloped by a framework. We encountered this compositional model, e.g., in Psalms 80, 81, 84 and 86. In this case, the core is the **33-word** section, **vs. 4-8** (column d):

vs. 1-3	Canto I	6 cola, 6 initial letters	19 words	YHWH's works in general
vs. 4-8	Canto II	10 cola, 10 initial letters	33 words	YHWH's miraculous acts
vs. 9-10	Canto III	6 cola, 6 initial letters	20 words	General conclusion.

Canto II, the core, deals specifically with YHWH's unique acts for which he has won renown in Israel, particularly the gift of the land, which occupies pride of place in the meaningful centre. It is surrounded by a **39-word** framework (19 + 20), which contains words devoted to YHWH's works in general (vs. 1-3) and the conclusion (vs. 9-10).

It is intriguing to note that the central sections of both Psalm 112 and 113, are also enveloped by a **39-word** framework. In my view, the use of exactly **39** words in these three psalms can hardly be coincidence. This number represents the YHWH-*echad* formula (**26 + 13 = 39**), which signifies YHWH's uniqueness. In Psalms 111 and 112, it is deliberately used to prelude the dominant theme of Psalm 113, the idea of YHWH's uniqueness and incomparability.

Therefore, for this reason alone, the canto division of Psalm 111 proposed here (vs. 1-3, **4-8** and 9-10), as in Psalm 112, definitely rules out other canto divisions, such as Van der Lugt's (1-4, 5-8 and 9-10) and Fokkelman's (1-6 and 7-10). See Observation 3 in my Analysis of [Psalm 112](#) and in that of [Psalm 113](#).

3. The divine name numbers feature only in the **17** words before *atnach* in vs. 4-8, and in the **52** (2 x **26**) words in total in vs. 1-8.
4. V. 10 may be considered a coda, being a general conclusion from the perspective of wisdom. For the coda, see the [General Introduction](#), "The use of a coda as a device for conclusion".
5. The name יהוה occurs 4 times (vs. 1a, 2a, 4b and 10a).

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