

Psalm 123— 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 123

- As in Psalm 122, the structure of the poem is determined by the direction of address.
- As in Psalms 121 and 122, the numerical values of keywords define the total number of words: in this case, the two words אֱלֹהֵינוּ, 'to YHWH' (v. 2e) represent the well-known YHWH-*echad* formula: **39 = 13 + 26**. See Observation 3.
- The **5** words of **v. 2e** constitute the meaningful centre on word level: **39 = 17 + 5 + 17**.

Strophic structure

- Van der Lugt and Labuschagne: 1, 2, 3-4 (3 strophes, 5 verselines, 11 cola, taking v. 2 as 2 bicolic verselines).
- Fokkelman: 1, 2, 3-4 (3 strophes, with 6 verselines and 13 cola (taking v. 2 as 3 bicolic verselines)).

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 shown in **brown**.

		Total	a	b	c	d
1	שִׁיר הַמַּעֲלוֹת	2 = 2 + 0				
	אֱלֹהֵיךָ נִשְׂאתִי אֶת-עֵינָי	4	4		4	
	הַיֹּשֶׁבִי בַשָּׁמַיִם:	2		2	2	
	Strophe 1 Total, v. 1	6 = 4 + 2 = 6 + 0				
2	הִנֵּה כְעֵינֵי עֲבָדִים אֶל־יָד אֲדוֹנֵיהֶם	6	6			6
	כְּעֵינֵי שֹׁפְחָה אֶל־יָד גְּבֻרָתָהּ = אֶל־יְהוָה	5	5			5
	בֵּן עֵינֵינוּ אֶל־יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ	5	5			5
	עד שִׁיחַנְנוּ: 39 = 17 + 5 + 17	2		2		2
	Strophe 2, Total, v. 2	18 = 16 + 2 = 0 + 18				
3	חָנְנוּ יְהוָה חָנּוּנִי	4	3		3	
	כִּי־רַב שָׂבַעְנוּ בּוֹז:	4		4	4	
	Total, v. 3	7 = 3 + 4 = 7 + 0				
	Total, v. 1-3	31 = 23 + 8 = 13 + 18				
4	רַבַּת שָׂבַעְתְּ לָהּ נַפְשֵׁנוּ	5	4		4	
	הַלְעַג הַשָּׂאֲנָנִים	2	2		2	
	הַבּוֹז לְגֵאֵוִינִים:	2		2	2	
	Total, v. 4	8 = 6 + 2 = 8 + 0				
	Strophe 3 Total, v. 3-4	15 = 9 + 6 = 15 + 0				
	Total, v. 1-4	39 = 29 + 10 = 21 + 18				
	Including the heading, v. 1-4	41 = 31 + 10				

Observations

1. The 5 middle words, v. 2c, constitute the meaningful centre on word level, which is strongly buttressed by being flanked by 17 words on either side ($39 = 17 + 5 + 17$):

כִּן עֵינֵינוּ אֶל־יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ So our eyes are turned to YHWH our God.

Their pivotal position is additionally reinforced by the fact that they fall within the middle verseline ($5 = 2 + 1 + 2$), which is the meaningful centre on verseline level:

כִּן עֵינֵינוּ אֶל־יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ ^ עַד שְׂיִחַנְנוּ:

So our eyes are turned to YHWH our God // until he have mercy upon us.

V. 2 constitutes the middle of the three strophes.

2. As in many psalms, the direction of address determines the basic structure of the psalm:

v. 1	addressed to God	1 verseline	2 cola	6 words
v. 2	spoken about God	2 verselines	4 cola	18 words
vs. 3-4	addressed to God	2 verselines	5 cola	15 words.

This means that there are strong caesurae between vs. 1||2 and 2||3, which cannot be ignored in search of the compositional structure.

3. As in the two preceding psalms, the numerical value of a keyword to determine the total number of words is used here as well. In this case, it concerns the two words אֶל־יְהוָה, 'to YHWH', positioned within the logotechnical centre. Taken together, their numerical value is 39: $(1 + 12) + (10 + 5 + 6 + 5) = 13 + 26$, which constitutes the well-known YHWH-*echad* formula.
4. The name יְהוָה occurs 2x (vs. 2c and 3a), and the word אֱלֹהֵינוּ, 'our God', 1x (v. 2e), as in Psalm 122.

© 2012
 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@gmail.com University of Groningen, The Netherlands