

Psalm 129— 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 129

- Psalm 129 has exactly the same structure as Psalm 130: 2 cantos with 4 strophes, 8 verselines, 17 cola and 52 (2 x 26) words.
- Also significant is the use of 7, the number of fullness: 7 bicola, 7 words in the statement about Israel's survival (v. 2), 7 words in the blessing to be withheld from all who hate Zion (v. 8bc), and 28 (4 x 7) words to describe their shameful downfall (Column d).

Strophic structure - Canto boundary: ||

- Van der Lugt and Labuschagne: 1-2, 3-4 || 5-6, 7-8 (2 cantos with 4 strophes, 8 verselines and 17 cola).
- Fokkelman: 1-3, 4-5, 6-8 (3 strophes with 8 verselines and 17 cola).

Logotechnical analysis

- Columns **a** and **b** show the number of words before and after the atnach.
- Column **c**: Israel's miraculous survival; **d**: the downfall of all who hate Zion.
- The numbering of the verselines coincides with that of the Masoretic verses.

		Total	a	b	c	d
1	שִׁיר הַמַּעֲלוֹת רַבַּת צָרָרוּנִי מִנְעוּרַי יֵאמְרוּנָא יִשְׂרָאֵל: Total, v. 1	2	2			
2	רַבַּת צָרָרוּנִי מִנְעוּרַי גַּם לֹא־יִכָּלֵוּ לִי: Statement about Israel's survival Total, v. 2	3	3		3	
	Strophe 1 Total, v. 1-2	6	3	3	6	0
3	עַל־גְּבֵי חָרְשׁוֹ חָרְשִׁים הָאֲרִיכוּ לְמַעַנְתָּם: Total, v. 3	4	4		4	
4	יְהִנֵּה צְדִיקָא קִצְצֵן עֲבוֹת רְשָׁעִים: Total, v. 4	2	2		2	
	Strophe 2 Total, v. 3-4	6	4	2	6	0
	Canto I Total, v. 1-4	11	6	5	11	0
		24	12	12	24	0

5	Middle words: 52=25+2+25	יִבְשׁוּ נִיֶּסְגוּ אָחֹזֵר	3	3	3
	Middle colon: 17 = 8 + 1 + 8	כָּל שְׁנֵאֵי צִיּוֹן:	3	3	3
	Middle instance of Zion in the Songs of Ascents	Total, v. 5	6	= 3 + 3 = 0 + 6	
6		Total, v. 3-5	17	= 9 + 8 = 11 + 6	
		יְהִי כְחֻצִיר גְּנוּתֵי	3	3	3
		שְׁקִדְמַת שְׁלֵף יָבֵשׁ:	3	3	3
		Total, v. 6	6	= 3 + 3 = 0 + 6	
	Strophe 3	Total, v. 5-6	12	= 6 + 6 = 0 + 12	
		Total, v. 4-6	17	= 8 + 9 = 5 + 12	
7		שְׁלֵא מִלֵּא כְּפֹ קוֹצֵר	4	4	4
		וְחֻצְגֹ מְעַמֵּר:	2	2	2
		Total, v. 7	6	= 6 + 0 = 0 + 6	
8		וְלֵא אָמְרוּ הָעֹבְרִים	3	3	3
	Words celebrating Israel's survival	בְּרַכְתֵּי הַיְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם	3	3	3
		בְּרַכְנוּ אֶתְכֶם בְּשֵׁם יְהוָה:	4	4	4
	The 4th and 5th instance in a series of 10 of בָּרַךְ, 'to bless'	Total, v. 8	10	= 6 + 4 = 0 + 10	
	See Observation 4	Strophe 4 Total, v. 7-8	16	= 12 + 4 = 0 + 16	
		Canto II Total, v. 5-8	28	= 18 + 10 = 0 + 28	
		Total, v. 1-8	52	= 30 + 22 = 24 + 28	
		With the heading, v. 1-8	54	= 32 + 22 = 26 + 28	

Observations

- The logotechnical centre is constituted by **יִבְשׁוּ נִיֶּסְגוּ אָחֹזֵר**, 'and may they be turned back' in **vs. 5a** (25 + 2 + 25). These two words may be meaningful, but the real meaningful centre is to be found in terms of the **17** cola: the central colon, **vs. 5a** (17 = 8 + 1 + 8). The logotechnical centre underscores the meaningful centre on colon level:

יִבְשׁוּ נִיֶּסְגוּ אָחֹזֵר

May they be put to shame and turned back.

The shameful downfall of all who hate Zion, brought about by a saving act of YHWH, is the quintessential idea of the psalm. Compare Observation 4.

- Formally, the first two verselines (vs. 1-2) resemble the initial verselines of both [Psalm 118](#) (vs. 1-4) and [124](#) (vs. 1-2), as regards the invitation to Israel to respond to the opening words of the psalm.
- It is probably not a matter of coincidence that the section dealing with Israel's miraculous survival (vs. 1-4, Column c) is made up of **24** words, with **12** words before and **12** words after atnach. The number 12 represents the 12 tribes and symbolically expresses the participation of all Israel in their survival. For a similar situation, compare Psalm 122 – see Observation 2 in my Analysis of [Psalm 122](#).
- The number of fullness, **7**, determines the number of words Israel is called on to say about their survival in **v. 2**, as well as the words spoken in **v. 8bc**. This is certainly not a matter of chance, but was purposefully designed in order to express symbolically the fullness of Israel's survival and the fullness of God's blessing sorely to be missed by those who hate Zion.
The same applies to the **28** (4 x 7) words used for the description of the downfall of all who hate Zion (Column d): **4** times **7** signifies 'worldwide seven times'.

The significant fact that the name Zion occurs exactly **7** times in the Songs of Ascents (125:1, 126:1, 128:5, **129:5**, 132:13, 133:3 and 134:3), with **129:5** at the centre, lays special emphasis on Zion as the worldwide hated place.

It is most intriguing to find that שָׁלוֹם, 'peace', also features exactly **7** times: 120:6, 7; 122:6, **7**, 8; 125:5 and 128:6, with **122:7** at the centre. For the symbolism of these two series of **7**, see Observation 7 in my Analysis of [Psalm 122](#).

In v. 8 we find the 4th and 5th occurrences of the keyword בָּרַךְ, 'to bless', in a distinct series of **10**. See Observation 6 in my Analysis of [Psalm 124](#), where the first instance occurs, the last three being in Psalm 134 at the end of the corpus, for which see Observation 3 in my Analysis of [Psalm 134](#).

5. Like [Psalm 130](#), Psalm 129 is made up of 2 cantos with 5 strophes, 8 verselines, 17 cola and **52** (2 x **26**) words.
6. In addition to the **17** cola, the divine name number **17** features also in the number of words in vs. 3-5 and vs. 4-6.
7. The name יְהוָה occurs 3 times (v. 4a and 2x in v. 8). It is worth noting that Psalms 125-129 have altogether **17** occurrences of the divine name. See Observation 5 in my Analysis of [Psalm 124](#).

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