

Psalm 134— 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 134

- As the tailpiece of the 15 Songs of Ascents, Psalm 134 rounds off the corpus in a most impressive fashion. It is clearly the follow-up to Psalm 133. The blessing YHWH commanded on Mount Zion (Ps. 133:3) is realized here. The summons to the priests and Levites to lift up their hands towards the sanctuary on Mount Zion constitutes the meaningful centre, v. 2. It is significantly surrounded by **17** words signifying YHWH's presence (**23** = 11 + 6 + 6). The *kabod* number **23**, symbolizes YHWH's presence in the sanctuary in another way.

Strophic structure

- Van der Lugt and Labuschagne: 1-2, 3 (2 strophes, 3 verselines and 7 cola).
- Fokkelman: 1, 2-3 (2 different strophes).

Logotechnical analysis

- Columns **a** and **b** show the number of words before and after the atnach.
- Column **c**: general summons: let YHWH's servants bless him and may he bless you;
- Column **d**: specific summons to bless YHWH *in the sanctuary on Mount Zion*.
- The numbering of the verselines is shown in **brown**.

		Total	a	b	c	d
1	שִׁיר הַמַּעֲלוֹת Heading	2 = 2 + 0				
Last 3 instances of	הַגֵּה ⁸ בָּרְכוּ אֶת־יְהוָה	4	4		4	
the root בָּרַךְ in a range of 10	כָּל־עַבְדֵי יְהוָה [^]	3	3		3	
See Observation 3	הַעֲמִידִים בְּבֵית־יְהוָה בְּלִילוֹת:	4		4	4	
	Total, v. 1	11 = 7 + 4			11 + 0	
2	Middle word: 23 = 11+1+11	3	3			3
	Middle verseline: 3 = 1+1+1	3		3		3
	Total, v. 2	6 = 3 + 3			0 + 6	
	Strophe 1 Total, v. 1-2	17 = 10 + 7			11 + 6	
3	See Observation 3	3	3		3	
	עֲשֵׂה שָׁמַיִם וָאָרֶץ:	3		3	3	
	Strophe 2 Total, v. 3	6 = 3 + 3			6 + 0	
	אֶת = 23 (1 + 22)	23 = 13 + 10			17 + 6	
	Total, v. 1-3	25 = 15 + 10				
	With the heading, v. 1-3					

Observations

1. The first word in v. 2, **שָׁאוּ**, 'lift up', constitutes the logotechnical centre: **23** = 11 + **1** + 11. In my opinion, **23** words were chosen for two reasons: first, to have a *kabod* number symbolizing YHWH's presence, and second, to have the pivotal word surrounded by **22** words, with **11** on either side - the number of *fulfilment* – to signify the fulfilment of YHWH's blessing. But there is a third reason: in light of the consistent use of the numerical value of a key-word in the Songs of Ascents, the accusative particle **אֶת** (vs. 1a and 2b) defines the number of words (1 + 22 = 23). The number **23** may be understood as expressing the idea of all-inclusiveness: from aleph to tau. Compare the 'Aleph-Tau device for inclusion' in Psalm 1 – see Observation 3 in my analysis of [Psalm 1](#).

2. The meaningful centre is to be found on verseline level, v. 2, the middle verseline:

שָׁאוּ יְדֵיכֶם קִדְשׁ ^ וּבְרַכּוּ אֶת־יְהוָה:

Lift up your hands towards the sanctuary // and bless YHWH!

In terms of words, the 6-word pivotal verseline is enveloped by **17** words (**11** + **6** + **6**), symbolizing the presence of YHWH in still another way (Columns c and d).

The summons to the priests and Levites to lift their hands towards the sanctuary on Mount Zion is particularly meaningful, because this is the place where YHWH commanded the blessing and where his command has to be executed. This is explicitly stated in Ps. 133:3c: "For there YHWH has commanded the blessing".

3. With the solemn summons to carry out YHWH's command, Psalm 134 concludes the 15 Songs of Ascents. It can safely be called the climax of the corpus, featuring the culmination of YHWH's expected blessing on Mount Zion:

- The corpus contains **10** instances of the root **בֵּרַךְ**, 'to bless' (in the pattern 7 + 3):
 - **7** instances of the *verb*: 128:4, 5, 129:8b, 132:15a, 134:1, 2 and 3
 - **3** other forms: **בְּרִיךְ** (124:6); **בִּרְכָה** (129:8a), and **בְּרַךְ** (132:15a).
- It also contains the last instance of the series of **7** occurrences of the name **Zion** (125:1, 126:1, 128:5, 129:5, 132:13, 133:3 and 134:3). For the symbolism and significance of this range of **7**, see Observation 7 in my Analysis of Psalm 122.
- And finally, Psalm 134 features the last 5 of the **51** (3 x **17**) occurrences of the name **יְהוָה** in the Songs of Ascents. Note the high density in a psalm with 23 words!

These three key-words, woven as red threads into the fabric of the text, reach their culmination point in Psalm 134. This is strong evidence for the compositional unity of all the psalms in this corpus. Moreover, they have an apparent follow-up in the remaining psalms in Book V (135-150). Psalms 135 and 136 continue and intensify the *praises* the people of Israel owe to YHWH, which culminate in the Concluding Hallel at the end of Book V (146-150). This is a clear indication that the Songs of Ascents do not stand on their own but are part and parcel of Book V. See the [Compositional structure](#), pp. 14-22.

4. There are no less than 5 occurrences of the name **יְהוָה** in Psalm 134. This is exceptional for such a short psalm, but the reason is obviously to achieve exactly **51** (3 x **17**) instances of the divine name in the Songs of Ascents. The shorter form **יְה** appears twice (122:4 and 130:3).

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