

Psalm 11— Logotechnical Analysis

Guidelines

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

Special features of Psalm 11

- The psalm is designed in such a way that the word **בַּשָּׁמַיִם**, 'in heaven', God's vantage point from where he observes and tests human beings, is positioned in the arithmetic middle of the text and also in the middle of the three words in v. 4b constituting the meaningful centre on word level.
- The author used special devices to highlight the two middle verselines in the central strophe, **v. 4**, which constitutes the larger meaningful centre on strophic level. The most spectacular device is that the 12 words of v. 4 have altogether **52** letters, with **26** in v. 4a-b and **26** in 4c-d.

Strophic structure - Canto/Stanza boundary: ||

- Van der Lugt/Fokkelman/Labuschagne: 1-3, 4, 5-7 (3 strophes, 8 verselines and 19 cola).
- For an overview of other divisions of the text, see Van der Lugt, CAS, Psalm 11, § 6.

Logotechnical analysis

- Columns **a** and **b** show the number of words before and after the atnach.
- Column **c**: the plight of the just (vs. 1-3); **d**: what God does (vs. 4-7).
- The numbering of the verselines is shown in **brown**.

| | | Total | a | b | c | d |
|---|---|-------|--------|---------|-------|-----|
| 1 | לְמִנְצַח לְדָוִד | 2 | 2 | | | |
| | Heading | | | | | |
| | בֵּיתָהּ חֲסִיתִי | 1 2 | 2 | | 2 | |
| | אֵיךְ תֹּאמְרוּ לְנַפְשִׁי | 3 | 3 | | 3 | |
| * | נֹדְדִי [תִּרְכָם צַפּוֹר] תֵּר כְּמֹה צַפּוֹר: | 3/4 | | 3/4 | 3/4 | |
| | Total, v. 1 | 8/9 | = 5 + | 3/4 = | 8/9 | + 0 |
| 2 | כִּי הִנֵּה הִרְשָׁעִים יִדְרְכּוּן קֶשֶׁת | 2 5 | 5 | | 5 | |
| | כּוֹנְנֵי חֶצֶם עַל־יָתֵר | 4 | 4 | | 4 | |
| | לִירוֹת בְּמוֹ-אֶפֶל לְיִשְׂרָאֵל: | 5 | | 5 | 5 | |
| | Total, v. 2 | 14 | = 9 + | 5 = | 14 | + 0 |
| | Total, v. 1-2 | 22/23 | = 14 + | 8/9 = | 22/23 | + 0 |
| 3 | כִּי הִשְׁתּוֹת יִתְרַסּוּן | 3 3 | 3 | | 3 | |
| | צַדִּיק מִה־פָּעַל: | 3 | | 3 | 3 | |
| | Total, v. 3 | 6 | = 3 + | 3 = | 6 | + 0 |
| | Total, v. 2-3 | 20 | = 12 + | 8 = | 20 | + 0 |
| | Strophe 1 Total, v. 1-3 | 28/29 | = 17 + | 11/12 = | 28/29 | + 0 |

| | | | | | | |
|---|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|---|-------|-------------|--------------|
| 4 | Middle colon: 19=9+ 1 +9 | יְהוָה בְּהִיכַל קָדְשׁוֹ | 4 | 3 | 3 | 3 |
| | Middle words: (67=32+ 3 +32) | יְהוָה בַּשָּׁמַיִם כְּסֵאוֹ | | 3 | 3 | 3 |
| | Two middle verselines: 8 = 3 + 2 + 3 | עֵינָיו יַחְזוּ | 5 | 2 | 2 | 2 |
| | | עַפְעַפְיוֹ יִבְחֲנוּ בְּנֵי אָדָם: | | 4 | 4 | 4 |
| | Strophe 2 | Total, v. 4 | | 12 | = 8 + 4 | = 0 + 12 |
| 5 | | יְהוָה צְדִיק וּבָחַן וְרָשָׁע | 6 | 4 | 4 | 4 |
| | | וְאָהָב חֲמוּסֵי שְׂנֵאָה נִפְשׁוֹ: | | 4 | 2 | 2 |
| | | Total, v. 5 | | 8 | = 6 + 2 | = 0 + 8 |
| | | Total, v. 3-5 | | 26 | = 17 + 9 | = 6 + 20 |
| | | Total, v. 2-5 | | 40 | = 26 + 14 | = 20 + 20 |
| | | Total, v. 1-5 | | 48/49 | = 31+ 17/18 | = 28/29 + 20 |
| 6 | | יִמְטַר עַל־רָשָׁעִים פָּחִים | 7 | 4 | 4 | 4 |
| | | אֵשׁ וּנְפֹרִית וְרִיחַ זֶלְעָפוֹת | | 4 | 4 | 4 |
| | | מִנֵּת כּוֹסִם: | | 2 | 2 | 2 |
| | | Total, v. 6 | | 10 | = 10 + 0 | = 0 + 10 |
| | | Total, v. 4-6 | | 30 | = 24 + 6 | = 0 + 30 |
| 7 | | כִּי־צְדִיק יְהוָה צְדָקוֹת אֱהַבֵּה | 8 | 5 | 5 | 5 |
| | | יֵשֶׁר יַחְזוּ פְּנֵימוֹ: | | 3 | 3 | 3 |
| | | Total, v. 7 | | 8 | = 5 + 3 | = 0 + 8 |
| | | Total, v. 6-7 | | 18 | = 15 + 3 | = 0 + 18 |
| | Strophe 3 | Total, v. 5-7 | | 26 | = 21 + 5 | = 0 + 26 |
| | | Total, v. 1-7: | | 66/67 | = 46+ 20/21 | = 28/29 + 38 |
| | | With the heading, v. 1-7: | | 68/69 | = 48+ 20/21 | |

* The problematic phrase נוֹדֵי הַרְרָם צְפוּרָה, 'flee to your mountain, bird' (vs. 1c) seems to make an emendation inevitable: reading with LXX, Syr, Targ. and Jerome, הָרַר כְּמוֹהַ צְפוּרָה, 'to the mountain like a bird'. The emendation causes an extra word.

Observations

1. In terms of the 67 words of the poem (emended text), the middle word is בַּשָּׁמַיִם, 'in heaven', God's heavenly vantage point (67 = 33 + 1 + 33), but the meaningful centre is constituted by the 3 words of vs. 4b (67 = 32 + 3 + 32):

יְהוָה בַּשָּׁמַיִם כְּסֵאוֹ, 'YHWH, in heaven is his throne'.

It is significantly flanked by the *kabod* number 32 on either side, which symbolizes the glory and the presence of God.

The meaningful centre on word level coincides with the middle colon (19 = 9 + 1 + 9) and is situated within the central strophe (1-3, 4, 5-7), which highlights its pivotal position in the text.

2. As Van der Lugt has pointed out, the twelve words in the middle strophe, v. 4, have altogether exactly 52 letters, with 26 (13 + 13) in 4a-b and 26 in 4c-d. This seems to have been consciously devised to highlight the two occurrences of the name YHWH at the beginning of both v. 4a and 4b. The remarkable word order in 4b can be explained as deliberately designed to achieve 13 letters, the numerical value of the word 'echad, 'one', symbolically signifying YHWH's uniqueness. The 'normal' word order, כְּסֵאוֹ יְהוָה בַּשָּׁמַיִם, 'the throne of YHWH is in heaven', would have 12 letters!

It is also worth noting that the central strophe, vs. 4, marks the beginning of the description of what *YHWH* does or is expected to do (vs. 4-7 – column **d**). Several devices highlight this central strophe. Therefore, there is every reason to believe that the author intended the middle strophe, coinciding with the two middle verselines, to be the larger (and a most fitting!) meaningful centre of his poem:

יְהוָה בְּהִיכֹל קָדְשׁוֹ יְהוָה בְּשָׁמַיִם כְּסֹאוֹ
 עֵינָיו יַחְזִיזוּ ^ עַפְעָפָיו יִבְחֲנוּ בְּנֵי אָדָם:

YHWH is in his holy temple // **YHWH**, in **heaven** is his throne
 His eyes behold // his eyelids test the children of Adam.

3. The arithmetic centre in v. 4b is additionally emphasized by the fact that it contains the middle (3rd) instance of the 5 occurrences of the name *YHWH*. This also holds true for the 3rd of the 5 instances of the divine name in Ps. 12:6 - see Observation 5 in my Analysis of Psalm 12. For further examples of this particular device, see the General Introduction, "The centre of the text" under "Special devices to highlight the meaningful centre".
4. The poem is phrased throughout as spoken about God in 3rd person form, both in vs. 1-3, dealing with the plight of the just being menaced by the godless, and in vs. 4-7, the description of what God does. God is not addressed directly; the words of the speaker are directed to his adversaries instead, but naturally in the presence of God.
5. The divine name numbers **17** and **26** have been woven into the text as follows:

| | |
|---------|--|
| vs. 1-3 | 17 words before atnach |
| vs. 3-5 | 26 words in total, with 17 before atnach |
| vs. 2-5 | 26 words before atnach |
| vs. 1-5 | 17 words after atnach (MT) |
| vs. 5-7 | 26 words in total. |

The use of 38 words to describe God's actions does not seem to have any special significance; neither does the use of 28 words to depict the plight of the just. The strange placement of the *atnach* (in the middle of a colon!) in v. 5b may be explained as deliberate in order to achieve the divine name numbers after the atnach in vs. 2-5 and 1-5.

6. The name יהוה occurs 5 times (vs. 1a, 4a, **4b**, 5a, 7a), as in Psalm 12.

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