

# Psalm 49— Logotechnical Analysis

## Guidelines

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

## Specific features of Psalm 49

- Psalm 49, which concludes the Group of Seven Korahite psalms in Book II, is primarily structured in terms of the poetic building blocks. The function of the divine name numbers is only to weave the name of God into the fabric of the text.
- As in Psalm 46 a refrain marks the canto structure, concluding the middle canto (6-13) as well as the last canto (14-21). Here, the numerical value of the keyword **יִקְחֵנִי**, 'he shall take me' (v. 16b), **61**, determines the number of words in the central canto.

## Strophic structure - Canto/Stanza boundary: ||

- Van der Lugt: 2-3, 4-5 || 6-7, 8-10, 11-13 || 14-15, 16-18, 19-21 (3 cantos, 8 strophes, 21 verselines and 44 cola, taking the **refrain** as a concluding device).
- Fokkelman: 2-3, 4-5 || 6-7, 8-10 || 11-13 || 14-15b, 15c-16, 17-18 || 17-18, 19-21 (5 stanzas with 9 strophes, 21 verselines and 44 cola).
- Labuschagne: 2-3, 4-5 || 6-7, 8-10, 11-13 || 14-15b, 15c-16, 17-18, 19-21 (3 cantos, 9 strophes, 21 verselines and 44 cola, taking the **refrain** as a concluding device, and vs. 14-15b and 15c-16 as separate strophes – see I.J.J. Spangenberg, "Constructing a Historical Context for Psalm 49", *Old Testament Essays* 20/1 (2007), 201-214).

## Logotechnical analysis

- Columns **a** and **b** show the number of words before and after the atnach.
- Column **c**: words in the framework; **d**: words in the core of the poem: Canto II.
- The numbering of the verselines is shown in **brown**.

|   |   | Total     | a    | b    | c    | d   |
|---|---|-----------|------|------|------|-----|
| 1 | לְמִנְצַח לְבְנֵי־קְרַח מְזִמּוֹר : Heading, v. 1 | 4         | = 4  | + 0  |      |     |
| 2 | שְׁמַע־זֹאת כָּל־הָעַמִּים 1                      | 4         | 4    |      | 4    |     |
|   | הָאֲזִינוּ כָּל־יֹשְׁבֵי הָאָרֶץ :                | 4         |      | 4    | 4    |     |
|   | Total, v. 2                                       | 8         | = 4  | + 4  | = 8  | + 0 |
| 3 | גַּם־בְּנֵי אָדָם גַּם־בְּנֵי־אִישׁ 2             | 6         | 6    |      | 6    |     |
|   | יִחַד עֲשִׂיר וְאַבְיוֹן :                        | 3         |      | 3    | 3    |     |
|   | Total, v. 3                                       | 9         | = 6  | + 3  | = 9  | + 0 |
|   | <b>Strophe 1</b> Total, v. 2-3                    | <b>17</b> | = 10 | + 7  | = 17 | + 0 |
| 4 | פִּי יִדְבֵר חֲקֵמוֹתָ 3                          | 3         | 3    |      | 3    |     |
|   | וְהִגִּית לְבִי תְבוּנוֹת :                       | 3         |      | 3    | 3    |     |
|   | Total, v. 4                                       | 6         | = 3  | + 3  | = 6  | + 0 |
| 5 | אֵשֶׁה לְמַשָּׁל אֲזַנִּי 4                       | 3         | 3    |      | 3    |     |
|   | אֶפְתַּח בְּכִנּוּר חֵידָתִי :                    | 3         |      | 3    | 3    |     |
|   | Total, v. 5                                       | 6         | = 3  | + 3  | = 6  | + 0 |
|   | <b>Strophe 2</b> Total, v. 4-5                    | <b>12</b> | = 6  | + 6  | = 12 | + 0 |
|   | <b>Canto I</b> Total, v. 2-5                      | <b>29</b> | = 16 | + 13 | = 29 | + 0 |

|     |                       |  |           |           |           |   |
|-----|-----------------------|--|-----------|-----------|-----------|---|
| 6   |                       | לָמָּה אֵיךָּ בִּימֵי רָעָה 5                        | 4         | 4         |           | 4 |
|     |                       | עוֹן עֲקֹבֵי יִסּוּבֵינִי:                           | 3         |           | 3         | 3 |
|     |                       | Total, v. 6  | 7         | = 4 + 3   | = 0 + 7   |   |
| 7   |                       | הַבְּטָחִים עַל־חֵילָם 6                             | 3         | 3         |           | 3 |
|     |                       | וּבָרַב עֲשָׂרָם יִתְהַלְּלוּ:                       | 3         |           | 3         | 3 |
|     |                       | Total, v. 7  | 6         | = 3 + 3   | = 0 + 6   |   |
|     | <b>Strophe 3</b>      | <b>Total, v. 6-7</b>                                 | <b>13</b> | = 7 + 6   | = 0 + 13  |   |
| 8   |                       | אָח לֹא־פָּרַח יַפְּדֶה אִישׁ 7                      | 5         | 5         |           | 5 |
|     |                       | לֹא יִתֵּן לְאֱלֹהִים כְּפָרוֹ:                      | 4         |           | 4         | 4 |
|     |                       | Total, v. 8  | 9         | = 5 + 4   | = 0 + 9   |   |
|     |                       | Total, v. 4-8  | <b>34</b> | = 18 + 16 | = 12 + 22 |   |
|     |                       | Total, v. 2-8  | <b>51</b> | = 28 + 23 | = 29 + 22 |   |
| 9   |                       | וַיִּקַּר פְּדִיּוֹן נַפְשָׁם 8                      | 3         | 3         |           | 3 |
|     |                       | וַיְחַדֵּל לְעוֹלָם:                                 | 2         |           | 2         | 2 |
|     |                       | Total, v. 9  | 5         | = 5 + 0   | = 0 + 5   |   |
| 10  |                       | וַיַּחֲזִיעוּד לְנִצְחָה 9                           | 3         | 3         |           | 3 |
|     |                       | לֹא יִרְאֶה הַשְּׁחַת:                               | 3         |           | 3         | 3 |
|     |                       | Total, v. 10   | 6         | = 3 + 3   | = 0 + 6   |   |
|     | <b>Strophe 4</b>      | <b>Total, v. 8-10</b>                                | <b>20</b> | = 13 + 7  | = 0 + 20  |   |
|     |                       | Total, v. 4-10                                       | <b>45</b> | = 26 + 19 | = 12 + 33 |   |
| 11  |                       | כִּי יִרְאֶה חֲכָמִים יְמוּתוֹ 10                    | 4         | 4         |           | 4 |
|     |                       | יַחַד כָּסִיל וְבַעַר יֵאבְדוּ 9                     | 4         | 4         |           | 4 |
|     |                       | וְעִזּוֹ לְאַחֲרִים חֵילָם:                          | 3         |           | 3         | 3 |
|     |                       | Total, v. 11   | 11        | = 8 + 3   | = 0 + 11  |   |
|     |                       | Total, v. 10-11                                      | <b>17</b> | = 11 + 6  | = 0 + 17  |   |
| 12* |                       | קְבָרָם/קְבָרִים [קְרָפָם] בְּתִימוֹ לְעוֹלָם 11     | 3         | 3         |           | 3 |
|     |                       | מִשְׁכַּנְתָּם לְדֶר וְדֶרָה 10                      | 3         | 3         |           | 3 |
|     |                       | Middle word: 161=80+1+80                             |           |           |           |   |
|     |                       | Middle verseline: קְרָאוּ בְּשִׁמוֹתָם עַל־אֲדָמוֹת: | 4         |           | 4         | 4 |
|     |                       | Total, v. 12   | 10        | = 6 + 4   | = 0 + 10  |   |
| 13  | 'Refrain'             | וְאָדָם בִּיקַר פֶּל־יִלְיִן 12                      | 4         | 4         |           | 4 |
|     |                       | נִמְשַׁל כְּבָהֶמוֹת נֶדְמוֹ:                        | 3         |           | 3         | 3 |
|     |                       | Total, v. 13   | 7         | = 4 + 3   | = 0 + 7   |   |
|     |                       | Total, v. 12-13                                      | <b>17</b> | = 10 + 7  | = 0 + 17  |   |
|     | <b>Middle strophe</b> | <b>Strophe 5</b>                                     | <b>28</b> | = 18 + 10 | = 0 + 28  |   |
|     |                       | Total, v. 11-13                                      | <b>48</b> | = 31 + 17 | = 0 + 48  |   |
|     |                       | Total, v. 8-13                                       | <b>61</b> | = 38 + 23 | = 0 + 61  |   |
|     |                       | <b>Canto II</b>                                      |           |           |           |   |

|    |           |   |    |     |            |            |
|----|-----------|---|----|-----|------------|------------|
| 14 |           | זֶה דְרָבָם כְּסֵל לְמוֹיֶ֑   | 13 | 4   | 4          | 4          |
|    |           | וְאַחֲרֵיהֶם בְּפִיהֶם יִרְצוּ סֵלָה׃   |    | 3   | 3          | 3          |
|    |           | Total, v. 14  |    | 7   | = 4 + 3    | = 7 + 0    |
|    |           | Total, v. 6-14  |    | 68  | = 42 + 26  | = 7 + 61   |
| 15 |           | כִּצְאֵן לְשֹׂאֵל שְׁתוּ  | 14 | 3   | 3          | 3          |
|    |           | מִן יָרְעָם   |    | 2   | 2          | 2          |
|    |           | <b>Strophe 6</b> v. 14-15b  |    | 12  | = 9 + 3    | = 12 + 0   |
|    |           | וַיִּרְדּוּ בָם יִשְׂרָיִם לְבַקֵּר   | 15 | 4   | 4          | 4          |
|    |           | וַצֹּרֶם לְבִלּוֹת שֹׂאֵל מְזַבֵּל לוֹ׃                                       |    | 5   | 5          | 5          |
|    |           | Total, v. 6-15  |    | 82  | = 56 + 26  | = 21 + 61  |
| 16 |           | אֲדָ־אֱלֹהִים יִפְדֶּה נַפְשִׁי מִיַּד־שֹׂאֵל־ <sup>^</sup> 61 = יִקְחֵנִי 16 | 16 | 6   | 6          | 6          |
|    |           | כִּי יִקְחֵנִי סֵלָה׃ (10 + 19 + 8 + 14 + 10 = 61)                            |    | 2   | 2          | 2          |
|    |           | <b>Strophe 7</b> Total, v. 15c-16   |    | 17  | = 15 + 2   | = 17 + 0   |
| 17 |           | אֶל־תִּירָא כִּי־יַעֲשֶׂר אִישׁ־  | 17 | 5   | 5          | 5          |
|    |           | כִּי־יִרְבֶּה כְּבוֹד בֵּיתוֹ׃  |    | 4   | 4          | 4          |
|    |           | Total, v. 16-17   |    | 17  | = 11 + 6   | = 17 + 0   |
| 18 |           | כִּי לֹא בְמוֹתוֹ יִקַּח הַכֹּל־  | 18 | 5   | 5          | 5          |
|    |           | לֹא־יִרַד אַחֲרָיו כְּבוֹדוֹ׃   |    | 4   | 4          | 4          |
|    |           | <b>Strophe 8</b> Total, v. 17-18  |    | 18  | = 10 + 8   | = 18 + 0   |
|    |           | Total, v. 16-18   |    | 26  | = 16 + 10  | = 26 + 0   |
|    |           | Total, v. 14-18   |    | 47  | = 34 + 13  | = 47 + 0   |
|    |           | Total, v. 11-18   |    | 75  | = 52 + 23  | = 47 + 28  |
|    |           | Total, v. 4-18  |    | 120 | = 78 + 42  | = 59 + 61  |
| 19 |           | כִּי־נַפְשׁוֹ בְּחַיּוֹ יִבְרָךְ־   | 19 | 4   | 4          | 4          |
|    |           | וַיִּוֹדֶךָ כִּי־תִיטֵב לְךָ׃   |    | 4   | 4          | 4          |
|    |           | Total, v. 19  |    | 8   | = 4 + 4    | = 8 + 0    |
|    |           | Total, v. 16-19   |    | 34  | = 20 + 14  | = 34 + 0   |
| 20 |           | הִבּוֹא עַד־דֹּר אַבּוֹתָיו־  | 20 | 4   | 4          | 4          |
|    |           | עַד־נִצַּח לֹא יִרְאוּ־אוֹר׃  |    | 5   | 5          | 5          |
|    |           | Total, v. 20  |    | 9   | = 4 + 5    | = 9 + 0    |
|    |           | Total, v. 19-20   |    | 17  | = 8 + 9    | = 17 + 0   |
| 21 | 'Refrain' | אָדָם בִּיקֵר וְלֹא יִבִּין־  | 21 | 4   | 4          | 4          |
|    |           | נִמְשַׁל כְּבִהְמוֹת נְדָמוֹ׃   |    | 3   | 3          | 3          |
|    |           | Total, v. 21  |    | 7   | = 4 + 3    | = 7 + 0    |
|    |           | <b>Strophe 9</b> Total, v. 19-21  |    | 24  | = 12 + 12  | = 24 + 0   |
|    |           | <b>Canto III</b> Total, v. 14-21  |    | 71  | = 46 + 25  | = 71 + 0   |
|    |           | Total, v. 8-21  |    | 119 | = 77 + 42  | = 71 + 48  |
|    |           | Total, v. 2-21  |    | 161 | = 100 + 61 | = 100 + 61 |
|    |           | With the heading and סֵלָה (2x), v. 1-21                                      |    | 167 | = 104 + 63 |            |

\* V. 12a: the word קָרְבָם, 'their inward', at the beginning of the verse is probably a scribal error for קִבְרָם, 'their grave', or קְבָרִים, 'graves' – compare the ancient versions (see *BHS*).

## Observations

- The middle word, **בְּשֵׁמוֹתָם**, 'with their names', in v. 12b ( $161 = 80 + \boxed{1} + 80$ ) cannot be regarded as a suitable meaningful centre. Such a centre is to be found in terms of the 21 verselines: the entire v. 12, the middle verseline containing the striking description of the dead-end life of those boasting of their riches ( $21 = 10 + 1 + 10$ ):

קְבָרִים בְּתִימוֹ לְעוֹלָם מִשְׁכְּנָתָם לְדֹר וָדֹר קָרְאוּ בְּשֵׁמוֹתָם עַל־אֲדָמוֹת:

Their graves are their homes forever, their dwelling places for all generations //  
they call their names over their lands.

The importance of the meaningful centre is significantly emphasized by the fact that it is immediately followed by a 7-word **refrain**:

וְאָדָם בִּיקָר בַּל־יָלִין ^ נִמְשָׁל כַּבְּהֵמוֹת נִדְמוֹ:

For human beings, like oxen, are short-lived // like beasts whose lives are cut short.

The refrain recurs at the end of the poem, in v. 21. Compare the 7-word refrain in Ps. 46: 8 and 12.

The fact that the meaningful centre on verseline level falls within the middle strophe, ( $9=4+1+4$ ), may suggest that Strophe 5 (vs. 11-13) is the larger meaningful centre.

- In terms of content, the poem divides into three distinct parts, of which vs. 6-13 constitute the central core (Canto II), a philosophical reflection on the main theme. It is concluded, and demarcated, by the refrain in v. 13. This is the canto structure:

|                 |                                      |                        |
|-----------------|--------------------------------------|------------------------|
| vs. 2-5         | Introduction to the theme            | 29                     |
| <b>vs. 6-13</b> | <b>Reflections on the main theme</b> | <b>61</b>              |
| vs. 14-21       | Conclusions                          | 71                     |
| vs. 2-21        | Total                                | 100 + <b>61</b> = 161. |

The **61** words of the core are enveloped by the 100 words of the framework. What makes the compositional formula  $161 = 100 + 61$  particularly significant, is the fact that it corresponds precisely with the final compositional formula based upon the division by atnach:  $161 = 100a + 61b$ . This can hardly be a matter of coincidence, since **61** represents the numerical value of **יִקְחֵנִי**, 'he shall take me', in v. 16b. Compare the use of **58** words – the numerical value of **יְמִינְךָ**, 'your right hand' - in the central core of Psalm 48!

The *selahs* at the end of v. 14 do not have a demarcating function, since this verse does not interrupt the flow of thought. It is apparently used to mark something of great importance in the text: the statement in v. 14, summarizing what has been said in Canto II about the fate of those boasting of their riches. The second *selah* primarily points to the word **יִקְחֵנִי**, 'he shall take me', which expresses in a nutshell the salvation of the speaker in contrast to the doom of the boasters. Since v. 16 appears to stand out in terms of contents, this *selah* also has a demarcating function.

3. Although the divine name numbers do not have a structural function, they nevertheless appear very frequently. Their main function is apparently to weave God's name, signifying his presence, into the fabric of the text:

|            |  |
|------------|--|
| vs. 2-3    | <b>17</b> words in total   |
| vs. 4-8    | <b>34</b> (2 x <b>17</b> ) words in total                              |
| vs. 2-8    | <b>51</b> (3 x <b>17</b> ) words in total                              |
| vs. 4-10   | <b>26</b> words before atnach  |
| vs. 10-11  | <b>17</b> words in total   |
| vs. 12-13  | <b>17</b> words in total   |
| vs. 8-13   | <b>17</b> words after atnach   |
| vs. 6-14   | <b>68</b> (4 x <b>17</b> ) words in total, with <b>26</b> after atnach |
| vs. 6-15   | <b>26</b> words after atnach   |
| vs. 15c-16 | <b>17</b> words in total   |
| vs. 16-17  | <b>17</b> words in total   |
| vs. 16-18  | <b>26</b> words in total   |
| vs. 14-18  | <b>34</b> (2 x <b>17</b> ) words before atnach                         |
| vs. 11-18  | <b>52</b> (2 x <b>26</b> ) words before atnach                         |
| vs. 4-18   | <b>78</b> (3 x <b>26</b> ) words before atnach                         |
| vs. 16-19  | <b>34</b> (2 x <b>17</b> ) words in total                              |
| vs. 19-20  | <b>17</b> words in total   |
| vs. 8-21   | <b>119</b> (7 x <b>17</b> ) words in total                             |
| vs. 1-21   | <b>104</b> (4 x <b>26</b> ) words before atnach.                       |

4. The name YHWH is absent; the word **אלהים** occurs 2x (vs. 8 and 16).

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