

Psalm 69— 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 69

- Psalm 69 divides into two parts, Cantos I-II, vs. 2-30 (words addressed to God) and Canto III, vs. 31-37 (words spoken about God). The meaningful centre of the entire psalm is to be found on word level: [vs. 17b-18](#), but each of the two parts has its own distinct meaningful centre, in these cases on verseline level: [vs. 15](#) and [34](#) respectively. The poem shares the feature of having more than one meaningful centre with several other psalms, e.g., 55, 56 and 57.
- As in Psalms 61, 63 and 64, syntax is used to weave extra divine name numbers into the fabric of the text: here, e.g., we find **51** (3 x **17**) words in the subordinate *kî*-clauses (except for v. 18b, which is a main clause). See Observation 3.

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

- Van der Lugt: 2-3, 4-5 | 6-7, 8-10, 11-13 || 14-16, 17-19 | 20-22, 23-24, 25-27, 28-29 || 30-32, 33-34, 35-37 (3 cantos with 4 canticles, 14 strophes, 38 verselines, 83 cola).
- Fokkelman: 2-3, 4-5, 6-7 || 8-10, 11-13, 14 || 15-16, 17-19, 20-21 || 22-23, 24-25, 26-27, 28-29 || 30-32, 33-34, 35-37 (5 stanzas with 16 strophes, 39 verselines, taking v. 14 as 2 bicola, and 83 cola, taking v. 15b-c as a single colon).
- Labuschagne: 2-3, 4-5 | 6-7, 8-10, 11-13 || 14-16, 17-19 | 20-21, 22-23, 24-25, 26-27, 28-30 || 31-32, 33-34, 35-37 (3 cantos, 4 canticles, 15 strophes, 38 verselines, 83 cola).

Logotechnical analysis

- Columns **a** and **b** show the number of words before and after the atnach.
- Column **c**: words directly addressed to God; **d**: words spoken about God.
- The numbering of the verselines is shown in **brown**.

		Total	a	b	c	d
1	לְמִנְצַחַת עַל־שׁוֹשְׁנִים לְדָוִד׃	4	4	0		
2	הוֹשִׁיעֵנִי אֱלֹהִים^	1 2	2		2	
	כִּי בָאוּ מִיָּם עַד־נַפְשׁ׃	5		5	5	
3	טָבַעְתִּי בֵּינֹן מְצוּלָה	2 3	3		3	
	וְאִין מְעַמָּד^	2	2		2	
	בָּאתִי בְּמַעַמְקֵי־מִיָּם	3 3		3	3	
	וְשַׁבַּלַּת שְׁטַפְתֵּנִי׃	2		2	2	
	Strophe 1 Total, v. 2-3	17	= 7	+ 10	= 17	+ 0
4	יִגְעֵתִי בְּקֶרְאֵי נַחַר גְּרוּנִי	4 4	4		4	
	כָּלוּ עֵינַי^ מִיַּחַל לְאֱלֹהֵי׃	4	2	2	4	
	Total, v. 4	8	= 6	+ 2	= 8	+ 0
5	רַבּוּ מַשְׁעָרוֹת רֵאשֵׁי שְׁנָאֵי הַנָּהָם	5 5	5		5	
	עָצְמוּ מִצְמֹתַי אִיבֵי שְׁקָר^	4 4	4		4	
	אֲשֶׁר לֹא־נִגְלַתִּי אֶז אֲשִׁיב׃	5		5	5	
	Total, v. 5	14	= 9	+ 5	= 14	+ 0
	Strophe 2 Total, v. 4-5	22	= 15	+ 7	= 22	+ 0
	Canticle I.1 Total, v. 2-5	39	= 22	+ 17	= 39	+ 0

6	אֱלֹהִים אַתָּה יַדְעָתָּ לְאַוְלָתַי [^] וְאַשְׁמוֹתַי מִמֶּךָ לֹא־נִכְחַדּוּ: Total, v. 6	6	4	4	4	4	4	
			4		4	4		
			8	= 4	+ 4	= 8	+ 0	
7	אֶל־יִבְשׁוּ בֵי קִוְיָךְ אֲדֹנָי יְהוִה צְבָאוֹת אֶל־יִכְלְמוּ בֵי מִבְקְשֵׁיךָ [^] אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל: Total, v. 7	7	4	4	4	4	4	
			3		3	3		
			4		4	4		
			2		2	2		
			13	= 11	+ 2	= 13	+ 0	
	Strophe 3	Total, v. 6-7	21	= 15	+ 6	= 21	+ 0	
8	כִּי־עָלִיךָ נִשְׁאַתִּי חֲרָפָה [^] כִּסְתָה כְלִמָּה פָּנָי: Total, v. 8	9	4	4	4	4	4	
			3		3	3		
			7	= 4	+ 3	= 7	+ 0	
9	מִזֹּרַח הַיָּיְתוּ לְאַחֵי [^] וְנִכְרֵי לְבָנֵי אָמִי: Total, v. 9	10	3	3	3	3	3	
			3		3	3		
			6	= 3	+ 3	= 6	+ 0	
10	כִּי־קָנַאת בֵּיתְךָ אֶכְלָתַנִּי [^] וְחֲרָפוֹת חוֹרְפִיךָ נָפְלוּ עָלַי: Total, v. 10	11	4	4	4	4	4	
			4		4	4		
			8	= 4	+ 4	= 8	+ 0	
	Strophe 4	Total, v. 8-10	21	= 11	+ 10	= 21	+ 0	
		Total, v. 6-10	42	= 26	+ 16	= 42	+ 0	
11	וְאַבְכֶּה בְּצוּם נַפְשִׁי [^] וַתְּהִי לְחֲרָפוֹת לִי: Total, v. 11	12	3	3	3	3	3	
			3		3	3		
			6	= 3	+ 3	= 6	+ 0	
12	וְאַתְנַה לְבוּשֵׁי שָׂקָא [^] וְאַהִי לָהֶם לְמִשְׁלָל: Total, v. 12	13	3	3	3	3	3	
			3		3	3		
			6	= 3	+ 3	= 6	+ 0	
13	יְשִׁיחוּ בֵי יִשְׁבֵי שְׁעָרָ [^] וְנִגְיֹנוֹת שׁוֹתֵי שֶׁכֶר: Total, v. 13	14	4	4	4	4	4	
			3		3	3		
			7	= 4	+ 3	= 7	+ 0	
	Strophe 5	Total, v. 11-13	19	= 10	+ 9	= 19	+ 0	
	Canticle I.2	Total, v. 6-13	61	= 36	+ 25	= 61	+ 0	
	Canto I	Total, v. 2-13	100	= 58	+ 42	= 100	+ 0	
14	וְאַנִי תִפְלֵת־לֶךְ יְהוָה עַת רְצוֹן אֱלֹהִים בְּרַב־חֲסִדֶיךָ [^] עֲנֵנִי בְּאַמֶּת יִשְׁעֶךָ: Total, v. 14	15	6	6	6	6	6	
			3		3	3		
			3		3	3		
			12	= 9	+ 3	= 12	+ 0	
15	הַצִּילֵנִי מִטִּיט וְאֶל־אַטְבָּעָה [^] אֲנַצֵּלָה מִשָּׁנָאִי וּמִמַּעַמְקֵי־מָיִם: Total, v. 15	16	4	4	4	4	4	
	Middle verseline of Cantos I-II		2		2	2		
	Meaningful centre		2		2	2		
			8	= 4	+ 4	= 8	+ 0	
16	אֶל־תִּשְׁטַפְּנֵי שִׁבְלֵת מַיִם וְאֶל־תִּבְלַעְנֵי מִצּוּלָה [^] וְאֶל־תֵּאֱטַר־רֵעֵי בְּאֵר פִּיהָ: Total, v. 16	17	4	4	4	4	4	
			3		3	3		
			5		5	5		
			12	= 7	+ 5	= 12	+ 0	
	Strophe 6	Total, v. 14-16	32	= 20	+ 12	= 32	+ 0	

17	ענני יהוה כִּי־שׁוּב חֲסִדָּךָ [^]	18	2/3	5		5
	Middle words of the			4		4
18	entire psalm	19	4	4		4
	287 = 137 + 137 + 13			5		5
	Meaningful centre of the psalm	Total, v. 17-18	18	= 9	+ 9	= 18 + 0
19	קָרְבָה אֶל־נַפְשִׁי גְאֻלָּה [^]	20	4	4		4
	לְמַעַן אֵיבִי פָדְנִי:			3		3
	Strophe 7 Total, v. 17-19		25	= 13	+ 12	= 25 + 0
	Canticle II.1 Total, v. 14-19		57	= 33	+ 24	= 57 + 0
20	אִתָּה יָדַעַתְּ חֲרַפְתִּי	21	3	3		3
	וּבִשְׁתִּי וּכְלִמְתִּי [^]			2		2
	גִּגְדֶךָ כָּל־צוּרְרֵי:			3		3
21	חֲרַפָּה שִׁבְרָה לְבִי וְאֲנוּשָׁה	22	4	4		4
	וְאֲקַנְיָה לְנוּד וְאֵין [^]			3		3
	וְלִמְנַחֲמִים וְלֹא מְצֹאתִי:			3		3
	Strophe 8 Total, v. 20-21		18	= 12	+ 6	= 18 + 0
22	וַיִּתְּנֵנוּ בְּבִרְוֹתֵי רֹאשׁ [^]	23	3	3		3
	וְלִצְמֹא יִשְׁקֹנֵי חֲמִץ:			3		3
23	יְחִי־שְׁלֹחֲנָם לְפָנֵיהֶם לְפַח [^]	24	4	4		4
	וְלִשְׁלוּמִים לְמוֹקֵשׁ:			2		2
	Strophe 9 Total, v. 22-23		12	= 7	+ 5	= 12 + 0
24	תַּחֲשַׁכְנָה עֵינֵיהֶם מִרְאוֹת [^]	25	3	3		3
	וּמִתְנִיחָם תְּמִיד הַמַּעַד:			3		3
25	שִׁפְדוּ־עֲלֵיהֶם זַעֲמָד [^]	26	3	3		3
	וַחֲרוֹן אַפָּךָ יִשִּׁיגֵם:			3		3
	Strophe 10 Total, v. 24-25		12	= 6	+ 6	= 12 + 0
26	תְּהִי־טִירְתֶּם נִשְׁמָה [^]	27	3	3		3
	בְּאֵהָלֵיהֶם אֶל־יְהִי יֹשֵׁב:			4		4
27	כִּי־אִתָּה אֲשֶׁר־הִכִּיתָ רְדָפוֹ [^]	28	5	5		5
	וְאֶל־מִכְאוֹב תִּלְלֶיךָ יִסְפְּרוּ:			4		4
	Strophe 11 Total, v. 26-27		16	= 8	+ 8	= 16 + 0
28	תִּנְהַעֲוֹן עַל־עֹנָם [^]	29	4	4		4
	וְאֶל־יִבְאוּ בְּצַדִּיקְתֶּךָ:			3		3
29	יִמְחוּ מִסִּפְרֵ חַיִּים [^]	30	3	3		3
	וְעַם צַדִּיקִים אֶל־יִכְתְּבוּ:			4		4
30	וְאֲנִי עֲנִי וְכוֹאֲבָ [^]	31	3	3		3
	יִשׁוּעַתֶּךָ אֱלֹהִים תִּשְׁגָּבֵנִי:			3		3
	Strophe 12 Total, v. 28-30		20	= 10	+ 10	= 20 + 0
	Canticle II.2 Total, v. 20-30		78	= 43	+ 35	= 78 + 0
	Cantos I - II Total, v. 2-30		235	= 134	+ 101	= 235 + 0

31	אֶתְהַלֵּלָהּ שֵׁם־אֱלֹהִים בְּשִׁירָה וְאֶגְדֵּלְנוּ בְּתוֹדָה: Total, v. 31	32	4	4	4	2	2	2	6 = 4 + 2 = 0 + 6
32	וְתִישָׁב לִיהוָה מִשׁוֹר פֶּר מִקֶּרֶן מִפְּרִיס: Total, v. 32	33	3	3	3	3	3	3	6 = 6 + 0 = 0 + 6
	Strophe 13	Total, v. 31-32	12	= 10	+ 2	= 0	+ 12		
33	רְאוּ עֲנוּיִם וְשִׁמְחוּ דִּרְשֵׁי אֱלֹהִים וַיְחִי לְבַבְכֶם: Total, v. 33	34	3	3	3	4	4	4	7 = 3 + 4 = 0 + 7
34	Middle verseline of Canto III: 7=3+1+3 Meaningful centre	כִּי־שָׁמַע אֶל־אֲבִיוֹנִים יְהוָה וְאֶת־אֲסִירָיו לֹא בָזָה: Total, v. 34	35	5	5	5	4	4	9 = 5 + 4 = 0 + 9
	Strophe 14	Total, v. 33-34	16	= 8	+ 8	= 0	+ 16		
35	יְהַלְלוּהוּ שִׁמּוֹם וְאַרְצֵן יָמִים וְכָל־רֵמֶשׂ בָּם: Total, v. 35	36	3	3	3	4	4	4	7 = 3 + 4 = 0 + 7
36	כִּי אֱלֹהִים יוֹשִׁיעַ צִיּוֹן וַיִּבְנֶה עָרֵי יְהוּדָה וַיִּשְׁבּוּ שָׁם וַיִּרְשׁוּהָ: Total, v. 36	37	4	4	4	3	3	3	10 = 7 + 3 = 0 + 10
37	זֶרַע עֲבָדָיו יִנְחַלְוֶהָ וְאֶהְבִּי שְׁמוֹ וְשִׁבְנוּ־בָהּ: Total, v. 37	38	3	3	3	4	4	4	7 = 3 + 4 = 0 + 7
	Strophe 15	Total, v. 35-37	24	= 13	+ 11	= 0	+ 24		
	Canto III	Total, v. 31-37	52	= 31	+ 21	= 0	+ 52		
	Cantos II.2-III	Total, v. 20-37	130	= 74	+ 56	= 78	+ 52		
	Cantos II-III	Total, v. 14-37	187	= 107	+ 80	= 135	+ 52		
	Total, v. 6-37		248	= 143	+ 105	= 196	+ 52		
	kî-clauses: 51 (3 x 17) words	Total, v. 2-37	287	= 165	+ 122	= 235	+ 52		
	With the heading, v. 1-37		291	= 169	+ 122				

Observations

- The middle word of the poem is פָּנֶיךָ, 'your face', in v. 18a (287 = 143 + 1 + 143), but it is the 13 middle words in vs. 17b-18 (the middle word and 6 words on either side) that constitute the meaningful centre on word level (287 = 137 + 13 + 137):

^{17b} כָּרַב רַחֲמֶיךָ פָּנָה אֵלַי:
¹⁸ וְאַל־תִּסְתֵּר פָּנֶיךָ מֵעַבְדֶּךָ
 כִּי־צָר־לִי מִהֵרָא עֲנֵנִי:

17b In your great compassion turn towards me!

18 Do not hide your face from your servant!

Truly, I am in dire straits! Make haste, answer me!

In vs. 17-18 as a whole, there is an even more meaningful centre, which the author may have designed as an off-centre meaningful middle (287 = 132 + 18 + 137): the entire passionate call on God to answer:

17 עֲנֵנִי יְהוָה כִּי־טוֹב חֶסֶדְךָ ^ כָּל־ב רַחֲמֶיךָ פָּנָה אֵלַי :

18 וְאַל־תִּסְתֵּר פְּנֶיךָ מֵעַבְדְּךָ ^ כִּי־צָר־לִי מִחַר עֲנֵנִי :

17 Answer me, YHWH, for your steadfast love is good!

In your great compassion turn towards me!

18 Do not hide your face from your servant!

Truly, I am in dire straits! Make haste, answer me!

The conspicuous imperatives עֲנֵנִי, 'answer me', at the beginning and end, which function as an *inclusio*, highlights these words in a special way. The last colon, v. 18b, appears to be the middle colon (83 = 41 + 1 + 41), which underscores the central positioning of these two verses.

This off-centre meaningful middle is additionally highlighted by the fact that the pivotal instance of the 5 occurrences of the name YHWH is situated within it. For this highlighting technique, see the General Introduction, "Special devices to highlight the meaningful centre".

2. In terms of the direction of address, the poem clearly divides into two distinct parts:

vs. 2-30 (Cantos I-II), the prayer (2nd person) 235 words

vs. 31-37 (Canto III), the resolve to praise God (3rd person) 52 (2 x 26) words.

For the striking use of the direction of address to weave extra divine name numbers into the fabric of the text, as here the 52 words spoken about God (Column d), compare Psalms 58, 59, 60, 62, 63 and 64.

Each of the two sections has its own distinct meaningful centre: v. 15 and v. 34.

Cantos I-II (vs. 2-30), the 2nd person section, have 31 verselines, with the central verseline, v. 15, as their meaningful centre, the call on God to rescue (15 + 1 + 15):

הִצִּילֵנִי מִטֵּיט וְאַל־אֶטְבְּעָה ^ אֲנַצֵּלָה מִשָּׁנְאֵי וּמִמַּעַמְקֵי־מַיִם :

With your faithful help rescue me from sinking in the mire //

Let me be rescued from my enemies and from the deep waters.

Canto III (vs. 31-37), the 3rd person section, consists of 7 verselines arranged in a menorah pattern, and is significantly made up of exactly 52 (2 x 26) words. Both factors taken together are cogent evidence for the structural unity of this section.

Its meaningful centre, v. 34, expresses confidence in God's faithfulness:

כִּי־שָׁמַע אֶל־אֲבִיוֹנִים יְהוָה ^ וְאֶת־אֲסִירָיו לֹא בִזָּה :

For YHWH listens to the poor // and those bound to him he does not despise.

3. The word-count of the subordinate *kî*-clauses could not be registered in Column d, but they are marked green in the first column. I understand כִּי in v. 18b not as a conjunction, but as an emphatic demonstrative particle: 'yes, truly'. It does not introduce the reason for the preceding plea that God should not hide his face from his servant (v. 18a), but marks the beginning of the description of his precarious situation which makes it necessary for God to hasten to answer him (v. 18b). This means that כִּי־צָר־לִי is not a subordinate clause, 'For I am in dire straits', but a main clause, 'Truly, I am in dire straits'. It is therefore not surprising to see that there are 51 (3 x 17) words in total in the subordinate clauses.

4. The structural unity of the poem as a whole is underscored by the following significant totals in which the divine name numbers feature:
- | | |
|----------------------------|--|
| vs. 2-37 (Cantos I-III) | 51 (3 x 17) words in the subordinate clauses |
| vs. 14-37 (Cantos II-III) | 187 (11 x 17) words in total |
| vs. 14-37 (Cantos II-III) | 156 (6 x 26) words in the main clauses |
| vs. 20-30 (Canto II.2) | 78 (3 x 26) words in total |
| vs. 20-37 (Canto II.2-III) | 130 (5 x 26) words in total |
| vs. 20-37 (Canto II.2-III) | 102 (6 x 17) words in the main clauses |
| vs. 31-37 (Canto III) | 52 (2 x 26) words in total. |
| vs. 2-3 | 17 words in total |
| vs. 2-5 | 17 words after atnach |
| vs. 2-5 | 34 (2 x 17) words in the main clauses |
| vs. 6-10 | 26 words before atnach. |
5. The name YHWH features 5 times (7, 14, 17, 32, 34), while אֱלֹהִים occurs 9 times (2, 4, 6, 7, 14, 30, 31, 33, 36) and אֲדֹנָי once, in the designation אֲדֹנָי יְהוָה זְבָאוֹת (v. 7b).

© 2008

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@planet.nl	University of Groningen, The Netherlands