

# Introduction to Book I (Psalms 1-41)

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## Purpose and Scope of the Logotechnical Analysis

The purpose of the present quantitative structural analysis is first and foremost to identify and describe the numerical features of the *individual psalms* to find out whether, and to what extent, such features shed new light on their compositional structure. I shall buttress the theory that they are numerical compositions with evidence to show that every single psalm is a literary work of art composed with great professional skill.

I invite the readers to accompany me on an exploratory expedition to discover for themselves what the present approach has brought to light. Exploring the numerical features of the text more deeply, we shall become aware of the exceptionally high frequency of the two numerical symbols representing God's Name and Presence (**17** and **26**), which are woven into the fabric of the text. Naturally, some of the occurrences of these two numbers and their multiples may be due to coincidence, but it would be unwise to wave all of them away as a matter of chance.

Moreover, in line with the awareness in Jewish tradition of the importance of the centre of a text, which contains its quintessential idea, we shall rediscover the significance of the arithmetic centre, not only of the individual psalms but of groups of psalms as well.

To give a few examples: the 15 words in Psalm 1:3 describing the qualities of the fruitful tree, constitute the arithmetic centre, which is flanked by **26** words on either side. The 3 words in Psalm 23:4, *ki 'attah 'immadi*, 'for you are with me', form the arithmetic centre, which is likewise flanked by **26** words on either side. Psalm 24, which focuses on the *universal kingship* of YHWH, is positioned at the centre of the sub-group of **11** psalms (19-29), in which Psalms 19 and 29, both dealing with YHWH's *universal presence*, function as a device for inclusion. In much the same way, the magnificent *maskil*, Psalm 78, is positioned at the centre of the **11** Asaphite psalms in Book III (Psalms 73-83). Its arithmetic centre is the middle verseline, v. 35, which is significantly emphasized by the fact that v. 35 contains the middle occurrence of the **7** instances of the keyword *Elyon*, running as a unifying thread through this sub-group. Note also that the very next verse, v. 36, is marked as the middle Masoretic verse of the Psalter!

The quantitative structural analysis of the individual psalms has opened up new perspectives for a fresh approach to the study of the compositional structure of the Five Books of the Psalter. Therefore, in the Introduction to each of the five books I shall widen the scope of my investigation to see what the logotechnical evidence can contribute to a better understanding of their compositional structure.

To this end, I provide a survey of the results of my analyses in four Tables, to be found below under "Overview of the Numerical Features of the Psalms in Book I".

Since my sole purpose, at this stage, is to bring the numerical features to the notice of the scholarly world, I shall not enter into discussion with other approaches to the issues in question. It may suffice to say that the present approach is in tension with traditional approaches based on the genres of the Psalms and their cultic setting. My method is essentially a literary approach focusing on the formal aspects of the texts. My point of departure is the insight that not only the individual psalms but also the Five Books and the Psalter as a whole are meticulously designed works of art, numerical compositions produced by word artists of the highest order. Therefore, I shall also examine their numerical features and tentatively assess the implications for our understanding of the formation of the Five Books and the Psalter as a whole.

This may shed new light on the literary, liturgical, and political role of the Psalms in their historical context.

## Preliminary Remarks

In the Masoretic tradition, Book I of the Psalter comprises **41** psalms, which is based on the supposition that Psalms 9 and 10 are two independent poems. However, there is strong logotechnical and other evidence to show that we have to do with a single composition, which means that Book I does not comprise 41, but **40** psalms. Like Psalm 9-10 in Book I, Psalm 42-43 in Book II is another single composition, which is traditionally counted as two separate poems. On the other hand, two distinct psalms, 114 and 115, in Book V are presented in MT (Leningrad Codex) as a single poem. Moreover, Psalms 7 and 40, which are rightly regarded in MT as single compositions, are in fact composites, i.e., combinations of two originally independent poems, as Pieter van der Lugt has recently argued in his book *Cantos and Strophes in Biblical Hebrew Poetry* (CAS). He divides Psalm 7 into vs. 1-9a and 9b-18, treating the two sections as separate poems. In my opinion, however, although the two sections can be differentiated, they form a single entity – see my Analysis of Psalm 7. This also holds true for Psalm 40, which clearly divides into two parts (vs. 1-13 and 14-18), which were skilfully fused together to form a single poem. From Van der Lugt's viewpoint, Book I has **42** psalms.

Of more importance than the precise number of psalms is the question regarding the compositional structure of the book. It is precisely in this respect that the study of the numerical features of the text can lead to fundamentally new insights. By using this approach, I shall endeavour to detect its real structure: the division into different sub-groups based on criteria such as significant series of psalms belonging together in terms of material content, leading themes and common formal traits, groupings based on numerical principles, and evident devices for inclusion. The criterion 'authorship' can of course be a great help, particularly in Books II-V. In Book I, of which the main component is the Davidic psalms, it is less helpful.

Far from being a conglomerate of psalms simply brought together to form an anthology, the psalms in Book I of the Psalter constitute a carefully designed and skilfully assembled corpus. This literary composite is made up of two categories of psalms – and this applies to the other books as well. First, existing psalms originating from older Davidic, Korahite, and Asaphite compilations, and second, new ones specifically composed in view of the formation of a Psalter. The psalms of both categories were contrived and adapted to form close-knit numerical compositions with a specific role in the book.

An in-depth examination of the formal features of these poems shows that certain devices were used to join them, e.g., keywords and verbal repetitions which link successive psalms. Here are a few examples of such linking keywords, apart from the name YHWH – see further below. First, the word '*name*' running through Psalms 7:18, 8:1,10, 9:3 and 11. Second, the word '*mortal*' runs through Psalms 8:5 and 9:20,21, and 10:18.

Third, the important keyword '*happy*', the initial word of Psalm 1, runs as a unifying thread through Psalms 2:12, 32:1, 32:2, 33:12, 34:9, 40:5 and 41:1. Moreover, the keyword '*happy*' -

the initial word of Psalms 32 and 41 – functions as a device for inclusion to delimit the sub-group Psalms 32-41. Being the first word also of both Psalm 1 and 41, it links the opening- and the concluding poem of Book I and functions as a framing device. That the word 'happy' is a keyword of paramount importance is shown by the fact that it appears exactly **26** times in the Psalter. For particulars, see Observation 3 in my Analysis of Psalm 1.

See now also J.C. McCann, Jr., "The Shape of Book I of the Psalter and the Shape of Human Happiness", in Peter W. Flint and Patrick D. Miller, Jr. (Ed.), *The Book of Psalms. Composition and Reception* (VT Supplements 99), Brill: Leiden, 2005, pp. 340-348. McCann mistakenly wrote that the word 'happy' occurs 25 times in the Psalter (p. 340); unfortunately he missed Ps. 128:2.

Numerous other verbal repetitions strongly suggest a relationship between individual psalms. Recently, both Pieter van der Lugt (CAS) and Gianni Barbiero have registered such repetitions – see the latter's book, *Das erste Psalmenbuch als Einheit* (ÖBS 16), Frankfurt a.M., 1999.

Other scholars did so earlier: F. Delitzsch, Chr. Barth, P. Auffret, E. Zenger, and others – see M. Millard, *Die Komposition des Psalters. Ein formgeschichtlicher Ansatz* (Forschungen zum Alten Testament 9), Tübingen 1994, pp. 23-27.

Duane Christensen has put forward evidence suggesting that also numerical patterns were used as a linking device to link all psalms in Book I: "the beginning of Psalm 2 through 41 in each instance is carefully contrived in terms of its numerical composition in word-count patterns with the closing verse of the previous psalm." For particulars, see his analyses on his website BIBAL.net. According to him, this holds true for all psalms in the Psalter.

A numerical device contrived to emphasize the unity of Book I, is the conspicuous number of *verselines*: **676** (**26** x **26**), provided that I have identified the verselines correctly. Another numerical device is the striking number of occurrences of the name YHWH: **272** (**16** x **17**). In both instances it concerns the psalms proper, *excluding* the headings and *selahs*. For particulars, see below Tables I and II.

Finally, the astoundingly significant total number of words in all the psalms of Book I - in this case, *including* the headings (but *excluding* the *selahs*), should be interpreted as reinforcing the unity of the book. The word-count in MT reveals a spectacular arrangement of the **5236** words in terms of the division by *atnach*:

**5236** (308 x **17**) words, with **3213** (189 x **17**) before and **2023** (119 [7 x **17**] x **17**) after *atnach*.

At the same time, this extraordinary arrangement clearly shows that the 2 '*amens* in 41:14, the 17 *selahs* and the *higgayon* (9:17) did not play a role in the word-count. These elements were added secondarily. For particulars, see below Table III.

That this striking formula is not an isolated case that can be waved aside as a matter of coincidence, is shown by the comparable compositional formula of the **28** Korahite, Davidic and nameless psalms of Book II, which constituted the original corpus of Book II (Psalms 42-72). That is to say, *excluding* the single Asaphite Psalm (50) and the single Solomonic Psalm (72), as I shall demonstrate in my Analysis of Book II - see the Introduction to Book II, Table VI, Observation 3, and also the Observation at Table VII. The compositional formula of these 28 psalms is: **3672** (216 x **17**) words, with **2295** (135 x **17**) before and **1377** (81 x **17**) after *atnach*.

Before elaborating on the striking numerical features of the psalms in Book I, let me present an overview in the following four Tables.

## Overview of the Numerical Features of the Psalms in Book I

**Table I:** Supposed authorship, the number of Masoretic verses, the occurrences of the divine name YHWH, its shortened form YH, the word *'elohim* and other designations;

**Table II:** The number of poetic verselines, the total number of words, before and after atnach (*excluding* the headings and *selahs*);

**Table III:** The total number of words, before and after atnach (*including* headings and *selahs*);

**Table IV:** Word-count of the headings and their positioning.

### Table I: Masoretic verses and divine name count

Psalms	'Author'	Masoretic Verses	The name YHWH	Elohim	Other designations
1	No name	6	2	-	
2	No name	12	3	-	Adonay 1
3	David	9	6	1	
4	David	9	5	-	
5	David	13	5	1	EI 1
6	David	11	8	-	
7	David	18	7/8**	2	EI 1 Elyon 1
8	David	10	2	-	
<b>2-8</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>82</b>	<b>36/37**</b>	<b>4</b>	
9-10	David	39	14	2	Elyon 1 EI 2
11	David	7	5	-	
12	David	9	5	-	Adon 1
13	David	6	3	-	
14	David	7	4	2	
15	David	5	2	-	
16	David	11	4	-	EI 1 Adonay 1
17	David	15	3	-	EI 1
<b>11-17</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>2</b>	
<b>1-17</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>187 (11x17)</b>	<b>78/79**</b>	<b>8</b>	
18	David	51	16/19**	-	
<b>9-18</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>150</b>	<b>56/59**</b>		
<b>1-18</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>238 (14x17)</b>	<b>94/98**</b>	<b>4</b>	
19	David	15	7	-	EI 1
20	David	10	5	-	
21	David	14	4	-	Elyon 1
22	David	32	6	-	EI 2
23	David	6	2	-	Adonay 1
24	David	10	6	-	
25	David	22	10	1	
26	David	12	6	-	
27	David	14	13	-	
28	David	9	5	-	
29	David	11	18	-	EI 1
<b>19-29</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>155</b>	<b>83/85**</b>	<b>1</b>	
30	David	13	9	-	Adonay 1
31	David	25	10	--	EI 1
32	David	11	4	-	
33	No name	22	13	-	

34	David	23	16	-	
35	David	28	8	-	Adonay 3
36	David	13	2/3**	2	EI 1 (superlative)
37	David	40	15	-	
38	David	23	3	-	Adonay 3
39	David	14	2	-	Adonay 1
40	David	18	9	-	
41	David	13/14*	5/6*	-	
32-41	Total	205/206*	77/78* (3 x 26)		
<b>1-41</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>636/637*</b>	<b>MT 271 / 272 (16x17)*</b> <b>With headings 277**</b>	<b>11*</b>	<b>EI 16, Adonay 14,</b> <b>Elyon 4, Elo'ah 1</b>

\* Since the doxology (Ps. 41:14) is not part of the psalm proper, I register it separately. Note that the one instance of YHWH in the doxology brings the total number of occurrences to exactly **272** (16 x 17)!

\*\* This refers to the **5** occurrences of the name YHWH in the headings of Psalms 7 (**1**), 18 (**3**) and 36 (**1**).

## Observations

- The 637 Masoretic verses include the doxology in Ps. 41:14.  
Psalms 1-17 have **187** (11 x 17) Masoretic verses  
Psalm 18 has **51** (3 x 17) Masoretic verses  
Psalms 1-18 (17 psalms!) have altogether **238** (14 x 17) Masoretic verses.
- In my count, Elohim as a substitute for JHWH occurs only **11** times. In some cases the word *'elohim* may not refer to JHWH but may simply mean 'a god', or 'a divine being', as in Ps. 8:6 and also in 10:4 and 14:1. These cases have been left out of consideration. In 9:18, 10:11 and 14:2 and 5, I take the word as referring to YHWH.
- The shortened form YH does not occur in Book I. The name YHWH is spread over the psalms of Book I in the following way (*excluding* the headings):

Psalms 6-8	<b>17</b>	occurrences
Psalms 6-9	<b>26</b>	occurrences
Psalms 1-10	<b>52</b>	occurrences (2 x 26)
Psalms 11-14	<b>17</b>	occurrences
Psalms 11-17	<b>26</b>	occurrences
Psalms 1-17	<b>78</b>	occurrences (3 x 26)
Psalms 21-26	<b>34</b>	occurrences (2 x 17)
Psalms 18-28	<b>52</b>	occurrences (2 x 26)
Psalms 32-33	<b>17</b>	occurrences
Psalms 30-34	<b>52</b>	occurrences (2 x 26)
Psalms 29-35	<b>78</b>	occurrences (3 x 26)
Psalms 34-36	<b>26</b>	occurrences
Psalms 36-37	<b>17</b>	occurrences
Psalms 32-41	<b>77</b>	occurrences
Psalms 37-41	<b>34</b>	occurrences (2 x 17)
Psalms 1-41	<b>272</b>	occurrences (16 x 17) in MT.

At this stage of the project, a sure conclusion to be drawn from these numbers is that they demonstrate the weaving of the divine name numbers into the fabric of the text, in such a way that new multiples of these sacred numbers are created, culminating in the impressive total number of **272** (16 x 17) occurrences of the name YHWH (*including* the doxology).

The number **77**, the number of occurrences of the divine name in Psalms 32-41 (*excluding* the one in the doxology), can be interpreted as having the role of emphasizing the unity of this group of **11** psalms (**77 = 7 x 11**). *Including* the doxology, we count **78** (3 x 26) occurrences.

**Table II: Verseline- and word-count excluding headings and *selahs***

Psalms	'Author'	Verselines	Total Words	Before Atnach	After Atnach
1	No name	6	67	47	20
2	No name	12	92	55	37
3	David	9	61	39	22
4	David	8	71	53	18
5	David	14	106	72	<b>34</b>
6	David	10	<b>78</b>	44	<b>34</b>
7	David	18	131	76	55
8	David	10	72	38	<b>34</b>
<b>2-8</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>81</b>	<b>611</b>	<b>377</b>	<b>234 (9x26)</b>
9	David	20	<b>156</b>	91	65
10	David	20	163	92	71
<b>9-10</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>319</b>	<b>183</b>	<b>136 (8x17)</b>
11*	David	8	67*	47*	20
12	David	8	74	45	29
13	David	6	<b>52</b>	29	23
14	David	10	71	45	<b>26</b>
15	David	5	53	<b>34</b>	19
16	David	10	95	55	40
17	<b>David</b>	<b>17</b>	122	71	<b>51</b>
<b>9-17</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>104 (4x26)</b>	<b>853</b>	<b>339</b>	<b>293</b>
18	David	<b>52 (2x26)</b>	377	217	160
<b>9-18</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>156 (6x26)</b>	<b>1230</b>	<b>556</b>	<b>453</b>
19	David	18	123	74	49
20	David	10	66	36	30
21	David	13	100	53	47
22	David	32	247	140	107
23	David	9	<b>55</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>23</b>
24	David	10	<b>85</b>	54	31
25***	David	21	158***	89	69
26	David	12	84	47	37
27***	David	22	149***	<b>104</b>	45
28	David	13	95	64	31
29	David	10	89	48	41
<b>19-29</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>170 (10x17)</b>	<b>1251</b>	<b>741</b>	<b>510</b>
30	David	12	92	61	31
31	David	29	217	158	59
32	David	14	105	77	28

33	No name	22	161	82	79
34	David	22	157	84	73
35	David	31	228	151	78
36	David	12	96	55	41
37	David	42	297	175	122
38	David	23	165	89	76
39	David	15	122	77	45
40	David	28	182 (7x26)	125	57
41	David	12 /13*	107/116*	61/70*	46
32-41	Total	221/222*	1620/1629*	975/984*	645
1, 2, 33	Total	40	320	184	136
Total	David	635/636*	4768/4777*	2901/2910*	1867
1-41*	Total	675/676*	5088/5097*	3085/3094*	2003
1-41**	Total	676* (26x26)	5106/5115*	3092/3096*	2014/2019*

\* Including the 1 verseline with 9 words of the doxology in 41:14 (numbers in green).

\*\* Including also the 18 extra words of the 17 selahs and 1 higgayon - see Table III below.

\*\*\* In Psalm 27 the 149 words include an extra occurrence of the name YHWH in v. 12a.

See my Analysis of Psalm 27.

## Observations

1. Divine name numbers featuring in the number of verselines:

Psalm 17            **17** verselines  
 Psalms 9-17       **104** (4 x **26**) verselines  
 Psalm 18           **52** (2 x **26**) verselines  
 Psalms 9-18       **156** (6 x **26**) verselines  
 Psalms 19-29     **170** (10 x **17**) verselines  
 Psalms 32-41     **221** (13 x **17**) verselines  
 Psalms 1-41       **676** (**26** x **26**) including the doxology.

2. In terms of words, the following multiples of the divine name numbers emerge:

Psalms 1-2        **102** (6 x **17**) words before atnach  
 Psalm 5           **34** (2 x **17**) words after atnach  
 Psalm 6           **78** (3 x **26**) words in total, with **34** (2 x **17**) after atnach  
 Psalm 8           **34** (2 x **17**) words after atnach  
 Psalm 9           **156** (6 x **26**) words in total  
 Psalms 9-10     **136** (8 x **17**) words after atnach  
 Psalms 9-11     **156** (6 x **26**) words after atnach  
 Psalms 9-13     **208** (8 x **26**) words after atnach  
 Psalm 13          **52** (2 x **26**) words in total  
 Psalm 17          **51** (3 x **17**) words after atnach  
 Psalms 19-21    **289** (**17** x **17**) words in total  
 Psalms 19-24    **676** (**26** x **26**) words in total  
 Psalms 19-26    **918** (54 x **17**) words in total  
 Psalm 27          **104** (6 x **17**) words before atnach  
 Psalms 19-29    **510** (30 x **17**) words after atnach  
 Psalms 19-31    **1560** (60 x **26**) words in total  
 Psalm 35 has     **78** (3 x **26**) words after atnach

Psalm 40 has **182** (7 x 26) words in total  
 Psalms 1, 2, 33 **136** (8 x 17) words after atnach (nameless psalms)  
 Davidic Psalms **4777** (281 x 17) words (including the doxology)  
 Psalms 1-41 **3094** (7x17x26) words after atnach (idem).

Some of the above numbers may be due to coincidence, but this cannot possibly apply to all of them. In any case, these numbers should be compared with the word-count of the psalms *including* the headings, found below.

**Table III: Word-count including headings, with/without the *selahs***

Psalms	'Author'	Word Total	Before atnach	After atnach	+ <i>selahs</i> & <i>higgayon</i>
1	No name	67	47+	20	
2	No name	92	55=102	37	
3	David	67	41	26	(3w.) 70 = 42 + 28
4	David	75	57	18	(2w.) 77 = 58 + 19
5	David	111	77	34	
6	David	84	50	34	
7	David	141	81	60	(1w.) 142 = 81 + 61
8	David	77	43	34	
1-8	Total	714 (42x17)	451	263	
9-10	Total	324	188	136 (8x17)	(3w.) 327 = 188+139
11	David	69	49	20	
9-11	Total	393	237	156 (6x26)	
12	David	79	50	29	
13	David	55	32	23	
9-13	Total	527	319	208 (8x26)	
14	David	73	47	26	
9-14	Total	560	366	234 (9x26)	
15	David	55	36	19	
16	David	97	57	40	
17	David	124	73	51	
16-17	Total	221 (13x17)	130 (5x26)	91	
18	David	397	228	169	
9-18	Total	1273	760	513	
19	David	126	77	49	
20	David	69	39	30	(1w.) 70 = 39 + 31
21	David	103	56	47	(1w.) 104 = 56 + 48
22	David	253	146	107	
23	David	57	34	23	
24	David	87	56	31	(2w.) 89 = 56 + 33
25	David	159	90	69	
26	David	85	48	37	
27	David	150	105	45	
28	David	96	65	31	
29	David	91	50	41	

19-29	Total	1276	766	<b>510 (30x17)</b>	
30	David	97	66	31	
31	David	220	161	59	
29-31	Total	<b>408 (24x17)</b>	277	131	
32	David	107	79	28	(3w.) 110 = 79 + 31
<b>33</b>	<b>No name</b>	<b>161</b>	<b>82</b>	<b>79</b>	
29-33	Total	<b>676 (26x26)</b>	438	<b>238 (14x17)</b>	
34	David	165	90	75	
35	David	229	151	<b>78</b>	
36	David	100	59	41	
37	David	298	176	122	
38	David	168	92	76	
39	David	126	81	45	(2w.) 128 = 81 + 47
34-39	Total	1086	649	437	
40	David	185	128	57	
41*	David	110/ <b>119*</b>	64/ <b>73*</b>	46	
32-41	Total	<b>1649 (97x17)</b>	1002	647	
<b>1, 2, 33</b>	<b>No 'author'</b>	<b>320</b>	<b>184</b>	<b>136 (8x17)</b>	
Total	David	4909/ <b>4918*</b>	3022/ <b>3031*</b>	<b>1887 (111x17)</b>	
<b>Totals</b>		5229/ <b>5238*</b>	3206/ <b>3215*</b>	2023	
1-41		<b>5236**</b>	<b>3213**</b>	<b>2023**</b>	18 = 2 + 16
		5256***	3217***	2039***	

\* Including the 9 words of the doxology, 41:14. \*\* Without 'amen we'amen (41:14). \*\*\* Including 'amen we'amen, selahs and higgayon.

## Observations

1. Numerically, the technical terms appear to be of little significance.
2. This cannot be said of the headings, since the figures in bold face in Table III show a considerable increase in multiples of divine name numbers compared with the figures in Table II. This clearly points to the deliberate use of the words in the headings to enhance the weaving of divine name numbers into the text.
3. The psalms in Book I (*including* the doxology in 41:14, but without the 2 'amens) have a most impressive compositional formula in terms of the division by atnach (in box):  

$$5236 (308 \times 17) = 3213 (189 \times 17) + 2023 (119 = 7 \times 17 \times 17)!$$
4. The word-count (*without selah and higgayon*) reveals a great number of divine name numbers and their multiples:

Psalms 1-8	<b>714 (42 x 17)</b> words in total
Psalms 9-10	<b>136 (8 x 17)</b> words after atnach (as in Table II)
Psalms 9-11	<b>156 (6 x 26)</b> words after atnach (as in Table II)
Psalms 1-8	<b>714 (42 x 17)</b> words in total
Psalms 9-10	<b>136 (8 x 17)</b> words after atnach (as in Table II)
Psalms 9-11	<b>156 (6 x 26)</b> words after atnach (as in Table II)
Psalms 1-8	<b>714 (42 x 17)</b> words in total
Psalms 9-10	<b>136 (8 x 17)</b> words after atnach (as in Table II)
Psalms 9-11	<b>156 (6 x 26)</b> words after atnach (as in Table II)

Psalms 9-13 **208** (8 x 26) words after atnach (as in Table II)  
 Psalms 9-14 **234** (9 x 26) words after atnach (as in Table II)  
 Psalms 16-17 **221** (13 x 17) words in total  
 Psalms 16-17 **130** (5 x 26) words before atnach  
 Psalm 21 **104** (4 x 26) words including *selah*  
 Psalm 23 **34** (2 x 17) words before atnach  
 Psalms 19-29 **510** (30 x 17) words after atnach (as in Table II)  
 Psalms 29-31 **408** (24 x 17) words in total  
 Psalms 29-33 **676** (26 x 26) words in total  
 Psalms 29-33 **238** (14 x 17) words after atnach (as in Table II)  
 Psalms 34-39 **650** (25 x 26) words before atnach  
 Pss. 1, 2, 33 **136** (8 x 17) words after atnach (as in Table II)  
 Davidic Psalms **1887** (111 x 17) words after atnach  
 Psalms 32-41 **1649** (97 x 17) words in total  
 Psalms 1-41 **5236** (308 x 17) words in total (including doxology)  
 Psalms 1-41 **3213** (189 x 17) words before atnach (idem)  
 Psalms 1-41 **2023** (119 = 7 x 17) words after atnach (idem).

This is additional evidence for the supposition that the number of words in the headings have been so designed as to generate extra multiples of **17** and **26** in the text, not only of the individual psalms, but also of the whole corpus in Book I. The numerical evidence also suggests that the *selahs* (and *higgayon*) were inserted secondarily.

My impression is that the evidence supports my view that the headings were not considered integral to the poems. If present, they were left out of consideration when the poets composed their psalms as numerical compositions. Further study of the relationship between the poems proper and the psalm texts including the headings in the other four books will shed more light on the role of the headings and *selahs*, and may lead to more decisive conclusions.

**Table IV: The headings: word-count and their positioning**

Psalm	'Author'	No heading	In the first verse	Separate Verse	Context
1	No name	X			
2	No name	X			
3	David		-	6 (2+4) words	4 words
4	David		-	4 words	
5	David		-	5 words	
6	David		-	6 words	
7	David		-	10 (2+8) words	8 words
8	David		-	5 words	
9	David		-	5 words	
10	-	X	-	-	
11	David		2 words	-	
12	David		-	5 words	
13	David		-	3 words	
14	David		2 words	-	
15	David		2 words	-	
16	David		2 words	-	

17	David		2 words	-	
18	David		-	20 (4+16)words	16 words
19	David		-	3 words	
20	David		-	3 words	
21	David		-	3 words	
22	David		-	6 words	
23	David		2 words	-	
24	David		2 words	-	
25	David		1 word	-	
26	David		1 word	-	
27	David		1 word	-	
28	David		1 word	-	
29	David		2 words	-	
30	David		-	5 words	
31	David		-	3 words	
32	David		2 words	-	
33	No name	X			
34	David		-	8 (1+7) words	7 words
35	David		1 word	-	
36	David		-	4 words	
37	David		1 word	-	
38	David		-	3 words	
39	David		-	4 words	
40	David		-	3 words	
41	David		-	3 words	
1-41	Total	3 psalms	15 psalms 24 words	In 22 psalms 117(82+35) words	In 4 psalms 35 words

The last column shows the number of words in the headings of 4 psalms used to describe the 'historical situation'.

## Observations

- Headings consisting of 1 or 2 words are positioned within the first verse. Those with 3 or more words are located in a separate verse. This has obviously everything to do with the number of verses desired by the Masoretes.

Psalms without a heading: 3 psalms: 1, 2 and 33 (10 taken as part of Psalm 9)

Heading in initial verse: in 15 psalms, with a total of 24 words

Heading as (extra) first verse in 22 psalms, with  $82 + 35 = 117$  words.

- At this stage of my psalms project, I may draw some preliminary conclusions in regards the relationship between the headings and technical terms, on the one hand, and the psalms proper, on the other. In the mainstream of scholarly opinion, the headings and technical terms have always been regarded as secondary elements added to the poems in the course of the formation of the five books of the Psalter.

Lately, Duane Christensen has rightly challenged the current view. There is no reason to doubt that the headings date back to the time of the composition of the psalms. The

crucial question is whether the words in the headings were considered part of the poetical bodies of the psalms. Christensen contends that they are integral to the psalms. See his 'logoprosodic' analysis on his website, BIBAL.net. However, my quantitative structural analyses supply ample evidence to show that the headings were not regarded as belonging to the poetic bodies of the psalms. Even if the poets have provided their psalms with headings – which is certainly possible -, they left them out of consideration when they composed their poems as numerical compositions.

Therefore, in my judgement, trying to identify the compositional structure of a psalm, we should not include the headings and the *selahs* in the word-count. For particulars, please consult my logotechnical analyses. Compare also my remarks in Observation 1 of my Analysis of Psalm 3, the first psalm provided with a heading and *selahs*.

## Significant Numerical Features of Book I

What follows is a survey of the most significant numerical features in the sub-groups of psalms that emerged on the basis of the logotechnical analysis.

### The book as a whole

Total number of verselines: **676** (26 x 26)

Occurrences of the name YHWH: **272** (16 x 17)

### Psalms 2-8

Total number of words after *atnach* **234** (9 x 26)

Note the number of words in Psalms 1-8 (including the headings): **714** (42 x 17)

Occurrences of the name YHWH in Psalms 6-8 **17**, with **26** in Psalms 6-9

Note the **52** (2 x 26) occurrences in Psalms 1-10.

### Psalms 9-18

Total number of verselines: **156** (6 x 26): **104** (4x26) in Psalms 9-17 and **52** (2x26) in Psalm 18.

Note the **78** (3 x 26) occurrences of the name YHWH in Psalms 1-17, with **26** in Psalms 11-17.

Note also the **238** (14 x 17) Masoretic verses in Psalms 1-18, with **187** (11 x 17) in Psalms 1-17.

### Psalms 19-29

Total number of verselines: **170** (10 x 17)

Occurrences of the name YHWH (including those in the headings): **85** (5 x 17)

Number of words after *atnach*: **510** (30 x 17)

Number of words in Psalms 19-21 (excluding the headings): **289** (17 x 17)

Number of words in Psalms 19-24 (excluding the headings): **676** (26 x 26)

Number of words in Psalms 19-26 (excluding the headings): **918** (54 x 17)

Note the **52** (2 x 26) occurrences of the name YHWH in Psalms 18-28

### Psalms 32-41

Total number of verselines (*excluding* the doxology): **221** (13 x 17)

Total number of words (including the headings): **1649** (97 x 17)

Occurrences of the name YHWH: **77** (7 x 11), with **34** (2 x 17) in Psalms 37-41

On the basis of the evidence presented above, we can safely conclude that the unity of Book I as a numerical composition is beyond dispute. The same holds true, in my judgement, for its sub-groups. Therefore, let us now examine its compositional structure more closely, about which there is so far little agreement among scholars.

## The Compositional Structure of Book I

At first sight, in terms of authorship, the following groupings emerge:

Psalms 1-2 (2 nameless psalms)

Psalms 3-32 (28 Davidic psalms),

Psalms 33 (1 nameless psalm)

Psalms 34-41 (9/10 Davidic psalms: 40 or 40a and 40b?)

In total 40/41 psalms: 37/38 Davidic and 3 not author related

In my opinion, Book I divides into the following sub-groups:

Sub-Groups of Seven      Sub-Groups of Eleven

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 | 9-10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 (17 psalms)

19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 (11)

30 31 Transition psalms

32 33 34 35 36 37 38 39 40a 40b 41 (11)

Book I: Basic Davidic Psalter: Psalms 1-41

As I shall explain in more detail in the chapter, “Compositional Structure of the Psalter”, the editors/composers used the numbers 7 and 11 as organizing principles to structure the psalms in the five books. Here is a brief overview:

**Psalms 1** is primarily the overture to the psalms of Book I and to the Psalter as a whole. In its immediate context, it serves as the introduction to the Davidic psalms to profile David as a king who observes the Torah. This implies that Psalm 1, being a nameless psalm, has been davidized. It deals with the happiness of a pious person, but by implication it portrays the Davidic king as such a person. This holds true for **Psalms 2** too, which opens the First Sub-group of *Seven* (Davidic) Psalms: **2-8**.

**Psalms 9-10** and **18**, the longest in Book I, encompass a Second Sub-Group of *Seven*: **11-17**.

**Psalms 19-29** form the First Sub-Group of *Eleven*, with **Psalms 24** at the centre.

Having recognized and defined **Psalms 19-29** as a distinct sub-group, we have very reason to question the validity of the grouping together of **Psalms 15-24**, as advocated by Auffret, Hossfeld/Zenger, Millard, Miller, Barbiero, and in their wake most modern commentators. In fact, two stronger sub-groups overlie them: **9-18** and **19-29**.

**Psalms 30-31** do not belong to a distinct sub-group, but appear to have a bridge function.

**Psalms 32-41** constitute the last sub-group, demarcated by 32 and 41, both of which have the keyword ‘happy’ as initial word, which functions as a device for inclusion.

When I assessed the number of poetic verselines, the following significant numbers emerged:

Psalms 9-18	156 (6 x 26) verselines
Psalms 19-29	170 (10 x 17) verselines
Psalms 32-41	221 (13 x 17) verselines ( <i>excluding</i> the doxology).

The numerical evidence drawn from the logotechnical analysis adds substance to the compositional structure of Book I as put forward by Van der Lugt (private communication):

Psalms 1-2	Introduction to the Psalter	18 verselines
Psalms 3-8	First cycle (7 psalms)	69 verselines
Psalms 9-18	Second cycle (9 psalms)	<b>156</b> (6 x <b>26</b> ) verselines
Psalms 19-29	Third cycle (11 psalms)	<b>170</b> (10 x <b>17</b> ) verselines
Psalms 30-31	Bridge (2 psalms)	41 verselines
Psalms 32-41	Fourth cycle (11 psalms)*	222**/ <b>221</b> (13 x <b>17</b> ) verselines
<b>Psalms 1-41</b>	<b>Total, including the doxology**</b>	<b>676 (26 x 26) verselines!</b>

\* Van der Lugt takes Psalm 40:2-13 and 40:14-18 as separate psalms.

The above division of the psalms of Book I is an appropriate starting point to detect the precise compositional structure of Book I.

For a full discussion, see the [Compositional Structure of the Psalter](#).

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