

# Introduction to Book III (Psalms 73-89)

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

As in Book II, the psalms of Book III are arranged on the basis of authorship, with the difference that Book III has no nameless psalms, in contrast to Book II, which has 3 nameless:

Psalms 73-83	<b>11</b> Asaphite psalms
Psalms 84-85	<b>2</b> Korahite psalms
Psalms 86	<b>1</b> Davidic psalm
Psalms 87	<b>1</b> Korahite psalm
Psalms 88	<b>1</b> Korahite psalm - a <i>maskil</i> of Heman the native-born
Psalms 89	<b>1</b> <i>maskil</i> of Ethan the native-born.

Book III is significantly composed of **17** psalms, clearly arranged in the pattern **17 = 11 + 6**. We shall meet this pattern again in Book IV. There is evidence to show that the eleven Asaphite psalms constitute a distinct sub-group. This also holds true for the six remaining psalms, which appears to be a collection of diverse poems: 4 Korahite, 1 Davidic and 1 Ethanite. As I shall demonstrate, Book III is the third expansion of the Davidic Psalter to round off the third stage in the formation of the Psalter: Psalms 1-89.

However, let us first survey the numerical features of these 17 psalms presented in the following Tables:

**Table IX:** supposed authorship, the number of Masoretic verses, the occurrences of the name YHWH, the word *'elohim* and other divine designations;

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

**Table XI:** the total number of words, and the words before and after *atnach* (*including* headings, with and without the *selahs*);

**Table XII:** the word-count of the headings and their positioning in the first verse.

**Table IX: Masoretic verses and divine name count**

Psalm	'Author'	Masoretic verses	YHWH	Elohim	Other designations
73	Asaph	28	1	3	Adonay 2 EI 2 Elyon 1
74	Asaph	23	1	4	EI 1
73-74	Total	51 (3x17)			
75	Asaph	11	1	2	
76	Asaph	13	1	2	
77	Asaph	21	0	6	YH 1 EI 3 Elyon 1
76-77	Total	34 (2x17)			
78	Asaph	72	2	8	EI 7 Elyon 3 Adonay 1
79	Asaph	13	1	1	Adonay 1
78-79	Total	85 (5x17)			
76-79	Total	119 (7x17)			
80	Asaph	20	2	5	EI 1 (superlative!)
81	Asaph	17	2	1	EI 2
76-81	Total	156 (6x26)			
82	Asaph	8	0	2	Elyon 1
83	Asaph	19	2	2	Elyon 1 EI 1
73-83	11 psalms	245	13	36	YH 1 Elyon 7 EI 17 Ad4
84	Korahites	13	7	4	EI 1
85	Korahites	14	4	-	EI 1
86	David	17	4	2	Adonay 7 EI 1
87	Korahites	7	2	-	Elyon 1
88	Korahites/Heman	19	4	-	
87-88	Total	26			
89	Ethan	52/53*	9/10*	1	EI 1 Adonay 2
84-89	Total	122/123*	30/31*	7	Elyon 1 EI 4 Adonay 7
76-89	Total	306 (18x17)*			
73-89	17 psalms	367/368* * Including 1 in the doxology	43/44* 44*+41=85	43	YH2 Elyon 8 EI 21 Ad 11 Altogether 42

## Observations

1. It is worth noting that divine name numbers and their multiples are to be found in particular groupings of Masoretic verses (Column 3). It is difficult to tell whether this was deliberately intended or simply a matter of chance. In my opinion, such a great number of them cannot be a matter of chance.
2. The 7 occurrences of the title Elyon in the Asaphite psalms – an important keyword - deserve special mention. The pivotal instance is to be found in Psalm 78, precisely in its middle verseline, vs. 35, the meaningful centre of Psalm 78 (73:11, 77:11, 78:17, **78:35**, 78:56, 82:6, and 83:19). See Observations 1 and 2 in my Analysis of [Psalm 78](#).
3. The word EI also occurs **7x** in Psalm 78 (vs. 7, 8, 18, 19, 34, 35, 41). Moreover, it appears **17** times in Psalms 73-83!

**Table X: Verseline- and word-count *excluding* the headings**

Psalm	'Author'	Verselines	Word Total	Before atnach	After atnach
73	Asaph	28	191	112	79
74	Asaph	23	193	96	97
73-74	Total	<b>51 (3x17)</b>	384	<b>208 (8x26)</b>	176
75	Asaph	11	80	49	31
76	Asaph	12	83	50	33
77	Asaph	20	146	82	64
78	Asaph	77	528	299	229
79	Asaph	16	<b>130 (5x26)</b>	86	44
75-79	Total	<b>136 (8x17)</b>	967	566	401
80*	Asaph	20	<b>130*</b>	70	60*
75-80	Total	<b>156 (6x26)</b>	1097	636	461
81	Asaph	16	120	66	54
79-81	Total	<b>52 (2x26)</b>	380*	222	158
82	Asaph	8	58	31	27
83	Asaph	18	126	70	56
82-83	Total	<b>26</b>	184	101	83
79-83	Total	<b>78 (3x26)</b>	564	<b>323 (19x17)</b>	241
<b>73-83</b>	<b>11 psalms</b>	<b>249</b>	<b>1785 (105x17)*</b>	<b>1011</b>	<b>774*</b>
84	Korahites	16	108	72	36
85	Korahites	14	91	<b>51 (3x17)</b>	40
86	David	<b>17</b>	145	90	55
87	Korahites	6	48	31	17
88*	Korahites/Heman	19	<b>130*</b>	76	54*
89:1-52	Ethan	<b>52 (2x26)</b>	372	199	173
89:1-53	Doxology included	53	377	<b>204 (12x17)</b>	173
84-89:52	Doxology excluded	124	894	519	375
84-89:53	Doxology included	125	899	524	375
<b>73-89:52</b>	<b>Doxology excluded</b>	<b>373</b>	<b>2679</b>	<b>1530</b>	<b>1149</b>
<b>73-89:53</b>	<b>Doxology included</b>	<b>374 (22x17)</b>	<b>2684</b>	<b>1535</b>	<b>1149</b>

\* Ps. 80:3a,1 word excluded, 16b, 4 words excluded\*; Ps. 88:9c, 1 word added

## Observations

1. Book III has **374** verselines (*including* the doxology), a multiple of **17** ( $22 \times 17$ ). This is in accordance with Book I, where the number of verselines (also *including* the doxology) are a multiple of **26** ( $676 = 26 \times 26$ ). It is also in line with Book IV, which has **338** ( $13 \times 26$ ) verselines. The solitary Davidic poem, Psalm 86, is made up of **17** verselines.
2. The **11** Asaphite Psalms are made up of **1785** ( $105 \times 17$ ) words (corrected text). Note the multiples of divine name numbers in Column 3: **51, 136, 156, 52, and 78!** The tailpiece of the book, Psalm 89, has **52** ( $2 \times 26$ ) verselines (excluding the doxology).

**Table XI: Word-count *including* the headings, with and without *selahs***

Psalm	'Author'	Word Total	Before atnach	After atnach	Including <i>selahs</i>
73	Asaph	193	114	79	-
74	Asaph	195	98	97	-
75	Asaph	86	<b>52</b>	<b>34</b>	87 (1)
76	Asaph	88	<b>52</b>	36	90 (2)
77	Asaph	151	87	64	154 (3)
78	Asaph	530	301	229	-
79	Asaph	132	88	44	-
80*	Asaph	141/136*	74/73	67/63*	-
81	Asaph	124	70	54	125 (1)
82	Asaph	60	33	27	61 (1)
83	Asaph	129	73	56	<b>130</b> (1)
<b>73-83</b>	<b>11 psalms</b>	<b>1829/1824*</b>	<b>1042/1041*</b>	<b>787/783*</b>	<b>1833* (9)</b>
84	Korahites	114	75	39	116 (2)
85	Korahites	95	55	40	96 (1)
86	David	147	92	55	-
87*	Korahites	<b>52</b>	32	20	54 (2)
88*	Korah/Heman	141*	84	57*	143 (2)
89:1-52	Ethan	375	202	173	379 (4)
89:1-53		380	207	173	384
84-89:52	6 psalms	923*	540	383/384*	<b>935</b> (11)
84-89:53		928*	545	383/384*	938
<b>73-89:52</b>	<b>17 psalms</b>	<b>2752/2748*</b>	<b>1582</b>	<b>1170/1168*</b>	<b>2768 (20)</b>
<b>73-89:53</b>		<b>2757/2753*</b>	<b>1587*</b>	<b>1170/1168*</b>	<b>2773</b>

\* Ps. 80:3a 1 word excluded, 16b 4 words excluded\*, Ps. 88:9c 1 word added\*.

## Observation

The 2773 words in the last Column do not seem to have any significance, but together with the 2429 in Book IV, the two books have **5202** words, a multiple of **17** ( $306 \times 17 = 153 \times 17 \times 2 = 9 \times 7 \times 17 \times 2 = 5202$ ). This is additional evidence for the 'togetherness' of Books III and IV, which are both made up of **17** psalms. I owe this observation to Dr. Jim McMillan.

**Table XII: The headings: word-count and their positioning in the first verse**

Psalm	'Author'	In the first verse	In a separate verse
73	Asaph	2 words	
74	Asaph	2 words	
75	Asaph		6 words
76	Asaph		5 words
77	Asaph		5 words
78	Asaph	2 words	
79	Asaph	2 words	
80	Asaph		6 words
81	Asaph		4 words
82	Asaph	2 words	
83	Asaph		3 words
<b>73-83</b>	<b>11 psalms</b>	<b>10 words</b>	<b>29 words</b>
84	Korahites		6 words
85	Korahites		4 words
86	David	2 words	
87	Korahites	4 words	
88	Korah/Heman		11 words
89	Ethan		3 words
<b>84-89</b>	<b>6 psalms</b>	<b>6 words</b>	<b>24 words</b>
<b>73-89</b>	<b>17 psalms</b>	<b>16 words</b>	<b>53 words</b>

## Observation

- All 17 psalms have headings; almost all are relatively short, having 2-6 words. The 11-word heading of Psalm 88 is an exception. In 7 psalms, the headings are incorporated in the first verse. In the remaining 10 psalms, they are positioned in separate verses.

## Significant Numerical Features of Book III

Book III has **17** psalms in total, arranged in the pattern **17 = 11 + 6** (as in Book IV!). It has been finalized/canonized, as witnessed by its **374** ( $22 \times 17$ ) verselines.

### The Sub-group of Eleven Asaphite Psalms: Psalms 73-83

Psalms 73-74	<b>51</b> (3 x <b>17</b> ) Masoretic verses
Psalms 76-77	<b>34</b> (2 x <b>17</b> ) Masoretic verses
Psalms 78-79	<b>85</b> (5 x <b>17</b> ) Masoretic verses
Psalms 76-79	<b>119</b> (7 x <b>17</b> ) Masoretic verses
Psalms 76-81	<b>156</b> (6 x <b>26</b> ) Masoretic verses
Psalms 81	<b>17</b> Masoretic verses

The keyword Elyon occurs **7** times, with the pivotal instance in Psalm 78:35.  
The other keyword, El, occurs **7x** in Psalm 78 and **17** times in Psalms 73-83.

### The Sub-group of Six Psalms: Psalms 84-89

Psalms 84	<b>17</b> Masoretic verses - the only Davidic psalm in this book
Psalms 86	<b>52</b> (2 x <b>26</b> ) Masoretic verses – excluding the doxology
Psalms 87-89	<b>306</b> (18 x <b>17</b> ) Masoretic verses – including the doxology.

## The Compositional Structure of Book III

**73 74 75 76 77 78 79 80 81 82 83** (11)

**84 85 86 87 88 89** (6) **11 + 6 = 17**

**Book III: Second Expansion of the Davidic Psalter: Psalms 73-89**

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

## Book III: Select Bibliography – in cooperation with Pieter van der Lugt

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