

Psalm 19— 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](#)".

Specific features of Psalm 19

- Psalm 19 opens the distinct sub-group of psalms, which I call the First Sub-group of Eleven Psalms (Psalms 19-29). It shares several traits with Psalm 29, which concludes the sub-group. Being particularly concerned with the Torah, it not only refers back to Psalm 1 at the beginning of the Psalter, but also preludes Psalm 119 at the end of the corpus consisting of Psalms 1-119. For particulars, see the Introduction to Book I and the chapter "Compositional Structure of the Psalter."
- In a most ingenious way, its numerical structure expresses the literary unity of the two distinct sections, vs. 2-7 and 8-15, and the close relationship between the Sun and the Torah. The central core of the psalm, [vs. 8-11](#), describing the features of the Torah, is surrounded by a [framework](#) consisting of exactly **85** (5 x 17) words. The larger central section, vs. 6-11, describing the features of the sun as a metaphor signifying those of the Torah, is made up of **55** words, which represents the numerical value of the keyword [שֶׁמֶשׁ](#), 'sun' (21 + 13 + 21). At the same time, it divides into the *kabod* numbers **23** and **32**, symbolically representing God's glory and giving expression to the idea that the entire universe is filled with his glory. In this respect Psalm 19 is reminiscent of Psalm 8.

Strophic structure - Canto/Stanza boundary: || Sub-canto boundary: |

- Van der Lugt: 2-4, 5-7 || 8, 9 | 10, 11 | 12-13, 14-15 (2 cantos, 3 sub-cantos in Canto II, with 8 strophes, 18 verselines and 40 cola).
- Fokkelman: 2-3, 4-5b, 5c-7 || 8, 9, 10, 11 || 12-13, 14-15 (3 stanzas with 9 strophes, 18 verselines and 40 cola).
- Labuschagne: 2-5 || 6-7 || 8, 9, 10, 11 || 12-15 (4 cantos with 7 strophes in a menorah pattern with **v. 9** at the centre, 18 verselines and 40 cola).
- For an overview of other divisions of the text, see Van der Lugt, CAS, Psalm 19, § 6.

Logotechnical analysis

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

		Total	a	b	c	d
1	לְמִנְצַח מְזִמּוֹר לְדָוִד : Heading, v.1	3	3			
2	הַשָּׁמַיִם ¹ מְסַפְּרִים כְּבוֹד־אֱלֹהִים ² וּמַעֲשֵׂה יָדָיו מְגִיד הַרְקִיעַ ³ : (11+2+6+4=23)	4	4		4	
3	יּוֹם ³ לְיוֹם יִבִּיעַ אִמְרָה ⁴ וְלַיְלָה ⁴ לְלַיְלָה יִתְּנֶה־דַעַת : (20+2+6+4=32)	4	4		4	
4	אֵין־אִמְרָה וְאֵין דְּבָרִים ³ בְּלִי נִשְׁמַע קוֹלָם : The 7 cosmic elements	4	4		4	
	Total, v. 2-4	23	12	11	23	0

5		בְּכָל־הָאָרֶץ ⁵ יֵצֵא קוֹם	4	4	4	4
		וּבְקִצָּה תִּבְלֶה ⁶ מְלִיֵּהֶם		3	3	3
		לְשִׁמּוֹשׁ ⁷ שָׁם־אֶהֱלֶה בָּהֶם: (21+13+21) = 55 שְׁמוֹשׁ		4	4	4
		Canto I Strophe 1 Total, v. 2-5		34	= 19 + 15	= 34 + 0
6	Description	וְהוּא כִּתְתֵן יֵצֵא מִחֻפְתּוֹ [^]	5	4	4	4
	of the	יְשִׁישׁ כְּגִבּוֹר לְרוּיֹן אֶרֶח:		4	4	4
7	features of the sun	מִקְצֵה הַשָּׁמַיִם מוֹצֵאוֹ	6	3	3	3
		וּתְקוּפָתוֹ עַל־קְצוֹתָם [^]		3	3	3
		וְאִין נִסְתָּר מִחֻפְתּוֹ:		3	3	3
		Total, v. 7		9	= 6 + 3	= 9 + 0
		Canto II Strophe 2 Total, v. 6-7		17	= 10 + 7	= 17 + 0
		Total, v. 5-7		28	= 17 + 11	= 28 + 0
		Cantos I-II Total, v. 2-7		51	= 29 + 22	= 51 + 0
8	Description of the	תּוֹרַת יְהוָה ¹ תְּמִימָה	7	3	3	3
	features of the Torah,	מְשִׁיבַת נֶפֶשׁ [^]		2	2	2
	vs. 8-11, Canto II	עֲדוֹת יְהוָה ² נְאֻמָּה	8	3	3	3
		מִחֻפְיֹת פְּתִי:		2	2	2
		Strophe 3 Total, v. 8		10	= 5 + 5	= 0 + 10
9	The 1 middle word	בְּקִדּוֹ יְהוָה ³ יִשְׂרָיִם	9	3	3	3
	The 2 middle verselines (v. 9)	מִשְׁחֵי־לֵב [^]		2	2	2
	The middle divine name	מִצּוֹת יְהוָה ⁴ בָּרָה	10	3	3	3
	The 4 middle cola	מְאִירַת עֵינַיִם:		2	2	2
	Middle strophe:	Strophe 4 Total, v. 9		10	= 5 + 5	= 0 + 10
10		יֵרֵאֵת יְהוָה ⁵ טְהוֹרָה	11	3	3	3
		עוֹמְדַת לְעַד		2	2	2
		מִשְׁפֵּטֵי־יְהוָה ⁶ אֲמַתָּה	12	3	3	3
		צִדְקוֹ יִחְדָּדוּ:		2	2	2
		Strophe 5 Total, v. 10		10	= 8 + 2	= 0 + 10
11		הִנְחִמְדִים מְזֻהָב	13	2	2	2
		וּמִפֵּז רֶבֶב		2	2	2
		וּמְתוּקִים מְדֻבָּשׁ	14	2	2	2
		וְנִפְתַּת צוּפִים:		2	2	2
		Strophe 6 Total, v. 11		8	= 4 + 4	= 0 + 8
		Total, v. 6-11		55	= 32 + 23	= 17 + 38
Features of the Torah	Canto III Total, v. 8-11			38	= 22 + 16	= 0 + 38
	Total, v. 2-11			89	= 51 + 38	= 51 + 38

12	Vs. 12-15	גַּם־עֲבָדֶיךָ נִזְהָר בָּהֶם ^א	15	4	4	4
	Words addressed to God	בְּשִׁמְרָם עֲקֹב רַב :		3	3	3
	Concluding prayer	Total, v. 12		7	= 4 + 3	= 7 + 0
13		שְׂגִיאוֹת מִי־יָבִינֶן ^א	16	3	3	3
		מִנְסֻתְרוֹת נִקְנִי :		2	2	2
		Total, v. 13		5	= 3 + 2	= 5 + 0
14		גַּם מְזִדִּים חֲשֵׁךְ עֲבָדֶיךָ	17	4	4	4
		אֶל־יִמְשְׁלוּ־בִיאֵז אִיתָם ^א		5	5	5
		וְנִקִּיתִי מִפֶּשַׁע רַב :		3	3	3
		Total, v. 14		12	= 9 + 3	= 12 + 0
15	Coda	יְהִי לְרָצוֹן אִמְרֵי־פִי	18	4	4	4
		וְהִגִּיזוֹן לִפִּי לְפָנֶיךָ ^א		3	3	3
		יְהוָה ⁷ צוּרִי וְנֹאֲלִי :		3	3	3
		Total, v. 15		10	= 7 + 3	= 10 + 0
	Canto III Strophe 7 Total, v. 12-15			34	= 23 + 11	= 34 + 0
	Framework, v. 2-7+12-15			85	= 52 + 33	= 85 + 0
	Total, v. 2-15			123	= 74 + 49	= 85 + 38
	With the heading, v. 1-15			126	= 77 + 49	= 88 + 38

Observations

- The middle word is the first word in v. 9, פְּקוּדֵי, 'the precepts': 123 = 61 + 1 + 61. Though meaningful in itself, it cannot be the consciously designed meaningful centre, which is to be found in terms of the poetical structure: v. 9, the middle strophe, coinciding with the 2 middle verselines and the 4 middle cola. The middle strophe is an eloquent expression of the gist of the poem and almost a summary of Psalm 119:

פְּקוּדֵי יְהוָה יִשְׂרִים מִשְׁמַח־לֵב^א מִצְוֹת יְהוָה בְּרָה מְאִירַת עֵינַיִם:

The precepts of YHWH are right giving joy to the heart;
YHWH's commandment is pure enlightening the eyes.

The central position of v. 9 is strengthened by the middle occurrence of the 7 instances of the name YHWH in the psalm. For this highlighting device, see the General Introduction, "Special devices to highlight the meaningful centre".

It is certainly not a matter of chance that the meaningful centre is composed of 10 words. This number subtly refers to the Ten Commandments as the heart of the Torah – see below Observation 8.

- It has long been recognized that the psalm divides into two distinct parts:

vs. 2-7 a hymn on the universe proclaiming God's handiwork
vs. 8-15 a didactic poem praising the excellence of the Torah.

However, the two parts should not be regarded as completely disparate texts that have been juxtaposed. On the contrary, the psalm is an incontestable structural unity, as shown by the carefully designed numerical framework, and by the poetical structure. In terms of content and seeing the skilful use of the divine name number 17 as a structuring device, there appear to be caesurae between vs. 5||6, 7||8, and 11||12, which determine not only the canto framework but also the strophic structure. Accordingly, I find 4 cantos with 7 strophes: 2-5, 6-7, 8, 9, 10, 11, and 12-15, with the meaningful centre, v. 9, at the centre of the menorah. This division of the text is in broad outline in accordance with the Masoretic verse division.

The regular poetic structure in terms of verselines, on the other hand, suggests a break in the text between vs. 5b||5c, which deviates from the Masoretic verse division as regards vs. 5 and 6. See Observation 4 below.

3. The delimitation of my 4 cantos and 7 strophes is significantly underscored by the numerical structure in which the divine name number 17 plays a crucial role:

I. Strophe 1, (2-5)	The Universe proclaims God's Glory	34 (17 x 2)
II. Strophe 2 (6-7)	The features of the Sun	17 +
III. Strophes 3-6 (8-11)	The features of the Torah	38 = 55
IV. Strophe 7 (12-15)	Concluding prayer	34 (17 x 2)

The 38-word core, Canto III (vs. 8-11), is surrounded by a framework made up of exactly 85 words (51 + 34 = 5 x 17). Because the psalm is particularly concerned with the Torah, it is not surprising to find the description of the features of the Torah in pride of place at the centre of the text.

Canto IV (vs. 12-15) stands out as a separate coherent literary entity, being the only passage directly addressed to God: a prayer for the right moral behaviour of the speaker (king David) personally. In terms of content, it elaborates on the coda of Psalm 118, v. 51, and at the same time on the key idea of Psalm 1.

The concluding verseline, v. 15, is clearly a coda: a specific prayer that the poem may be acceptable in God's sight. Which it certainly is, being such a showpiece!

4. A closer examination of the poetic framework in terms of verselines reveals a very regular structure, which overlies the numerical framework presented above. The difference occurs in regards the colon division in vs. 5-6. Many scholars found and still find a break in the text between vs. 5b||5c:¹

vs 5a-b	1 verseline with 2 cola
vs. 5c-6	1 verseline with 3 cola

This implies that each of the two main parts of the psalm, vs. 2-7 and 8-15, which are predominantly composed of *bicollic verselines*, is concluded by 2 tricollic verselines:²

vs. 2-5b	4 <i>bicollic verselines</i>
<u>vs. 5c-7</u>	<u>2 tricollic verselines</u>
vs. 8-13	10 <i>bicollic verselines</i>
<u>vs. 14-15</u>	<u>2 tricollic verselines.</u>

This may be adduced as evidence supporting the above colon division of vs. 5-6. However, in my judgement, the dominant numerical structure of vs. 6-11 definitely takes priority over the poetical framework. First, because it is strongly underscored by the double *kabod* pattern and the 17 words in vs. 6-7, and second, given the two well-defined complementary categories 'Features of the Sun', in vs. 6-7, and 'Features of the Torah', in vs. 8-11.

The presumed break between vs. 5b||5c suggests that v. 5c, the colon about the sun as the 7th cosmic element in the series listed in Strophe 1, should be detached from its context and connected to Strophe 2 specifically describing the features of the sun. However, this would disturb the numerical structure, and even worse, unsettle the consciously designed balance between the features of the Sun and the Torah. In any case, v. 5c, is the link between Strophe 1 (vs. 2-5) and Strophe 2 (vs. 6-7).

¹ From Zenner (1906) and Duhm (1922) through Fokkelman (2000) and Weber (2001). See Van der Lugt, CAS, pp. 222-223.

² See Fokkelman's strophic structure above and compare the verseline structure presented by Van der Lugt in CAS, p.219.

5. The author employed the numerical values of the keyword **כְּבוֹד**, 'glory', to signify the glory of YHWH in the universe. We find its *positional* value, **23** (11 + 2 + 6 + 4), in the total number of words in vs. 2-4, and in the words before atnach in vs. 2-6. Its *decimal* value, **32** (20 + 2 + 6 + 4) is to be found in the compositional formula of vs. 6-11, which is significantly **55 = 32a + 23b**, the well-known double *kabod* pattern. This demonstrates the close connection between **Canto II** and **Canto III**. For the *positional* and *decimal* values of **כְּבוֹד**, see the General Introduction, p. 5.
6. Apart from the author's use of the **55**-word double *kabod* formula primarily to signify the glory of God in the universe, he opted for its use for still another reason. The number **55** happens to represent the numerical value (21 + 13 + 21 = **55**) of the keyword **שֶׁמֶשׁ**, 'sun' (v. 5b), which determines the number of words in Cantos II-III.
7. The psalm is also structured by the number **7**, the number of fullness and abundance:
 - (i) by the use of a 3-word heading the editor(s) achieved multiples of **7** in the compositional formula of the entire text: 126 = 77a + 49b;
 - (ii) the psalm proper is divided into **14** Masoretic verses;
 - (iii) there are **7** occurrences of the name YHWH (8a, 8b, 9a, **9b**, 10a, 10b, 15b), with the reference to YHWH's radiant commandments (**9b**) precisely within the meaningful centre, hinting at the radiance of the sun;
 - (iv) **7** cosmic elements are mentioned in vs. 2-5;
 - (v) **14** (2 x 7) characteristics of the Torah are referred to in vs. 8-11.

The author has made the fullest possible use of the number **7** to symbolize the 'fullness' and 'abundance' of God's presence and the blessings of the Torah:

	7 Cosmic Elements	7 Aspects of Torah (1)	7 Aspects of Torah (2)
1	heavens (2a)	it is perfect (8a)	enlightens the eyes (9d)
2	vault of heaven (2b)	revives the soul (8b)	it is pure (10a)
3	day (3a)	it is stable (8c)	endures for ever (10b)
4	night (3b)	makes wise (8d)	it is true (10c)
5	earth (5a)	it is right (9a)	righteous (10d)
6	end of the world (5a)	rejoices the heart (9b)	better than gold (11ab)
7	sun (5b)	it is radiant (9c)	sweeter than honey (11cd)

The **Sun** is the **7th** cosmic element, and '**radiant**' the **7th** characteristic of the Torah! For more details, see my *Numerical Secrets of the Bible*, pp. 147-149.

The significant numerical aspects of Psalm 19 show that it is a high-grade numerical composition of exceptional beauty, a real work of art. In a most ingenious way the author made use of numerical compositional techniques to underscore his message that the entire universe - in which the Sun and the Torah occupy a central position - proclaims God's glorious handiwork.

8. It is worth mentioning that the three verses constituting the centre of the poem, v. 8, v. 9, and v. 10, as well as the coda in v. 15, are all composed of exactly **10** words. In my judgement, this was consciously intended as a subtle reference to the Ten Commandments, which constitute the heart of the Torah.

9. The divine name number **17** and the *kabod* numbers have been woven into the fabric of the text as follows:

vs. 2-4	23 words in total
vs. 2-5	34 (2 x 17) words in total
vs. 6-7	17 words in total
vs. 5-7	17 words before atnach
vs. 6-11	32 words before and 23 after atnach
vs. 2-11	51 (3 x 17) words before atnach
vs. 12-15	34 (2 x 17) words in total, with 23 before atnach
vs. 2-7 + 12-15	85 (5 x 17) words, with 52 (2 x 26) before atnach.

10. The name יהוה occurs **7** times (vs. 8a, 8c, 9a, **9c**, 10a, 10c, and 15c), with the pivotal instance precisely within the meaningful centre! The designation אֱלֹהִים occurs in v. 2a.

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