

Psalm 33— 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 33

- The psalm is characterized by its regular structure: 22 verselines with 44 cola. Although this is not an alphabetic acrostic psalm, it resembles them in having 22 verselines, and is as such a very fitting prelude to the alphabetic acrostic Psalm 34.
- The syntactical division of words into main and subordinate clauses is used together with the number of fullness (7) to buttress the alphabetizing structure numerically.
- The significant middle word אֲשֵׁרִי, 'happy' (80 + 1 + 80), is carefully positioned at the centre of the 17 middle words in vs. 11-12, which constitute the meaningful centre (72 + 17 + 72). They coincide with the 2 middle verselines (10 + 2 + 10) and the 4 middle cola (20 + 4 + 20).
- The high frequency of the occurrences of the name YHWH (13x), and especially that of the divine name number 17, as well as the *kabod* numbers 23 and 32, logotechnically highlights the uniqueness of YHWH as the God of Israel.

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

- Van der Lugt: 1-3, 4-5, 6-7 | 8-9, 10-11 || 12-13, 14-15 | 16-17, 18-19, 20-22 (2 cantos with 2 Canticles each, 10 strophes with 22 verselines and 44 cola).
- Fokkelman: 1-3, 4-5, 6-7 || 8-9, 10-12, 13-15 || 16-17, 18-19, 20-22 (3 stanzas with 9 strophes and 22 verselines, taking 10-12 and 13-15 as two strophes).
- Labuschagne: 1-3 | 4-5, 6-7 | 8-9, 10-12 || 13-15 | 16-17, 18-19 | 20-22 (2 cantos with 3 Canticles each and 9 strophes, because I agree with Fokkelman that there is no break between vs. 11||12 and between vs. 13||14; I too find 22 verselines preluding Psalm 34).
- For an overview of other divisions of the text, see Van der Lugt, CAS, Psalm 33, § 6.

The logotechnical analysis

- Columns **a** and **b** show the number of words before and after the atnach.
- Column **c**: words in the main clauses; **d**: words in the subordinate clauses.
- The numbering of the verselines correspond with that of the Masoretic verses.

		Total	a	b	c	d
1	רָנְנוּ צְדִיקִים בַּיהוָה	3	3		3	
	לְיֹשְׁרִים נְאֻהָ תְהִלָּה:	3		3	3	
	Total, v. 1	6	= 3	+ 3	= 6	+ 0
2	הוֹדוּ לַיהוָה בְּכִנּוֹר	3	3		3	
	בְּנֶגְבַל עֲשׂוֹר זְמִירוֹלוֹ:	4		4	4	
	Total, v. 2	7	= 3	+ 4	= 7	+ 0
3	שִׁירוֹלוֹ שִׁיר חֲדָשׁ	4	4		4	
	הִיטִיבוּ נֶגֶן בְּתִרְעָה:	3		3	3	
	Total, v. 3	7	= 4	+ 3	= 7	+ 0
	Canticle I.1 Strophe 1 Total, v. 1-3	20	= 10	+ 10	= 20	+ 0

4	כִּי־יֵשֶׁר דְּבַר־יְהוָה [^] וְכָל־מַעֲשָׂהוּ בְּאִמּוֹנָה: Total, v. 4	4 4 4 <u>3 3</u> 7 = 4 + 3 = 0 + 7
5	אֱהָב צְדָקָה וּמִשְׁפָּט [^] חֶסֶד יְהוָה מִלְּאֵה הָאָרֶץ: Total, v. 5	3 3 3 <u>4 4 4</u> 7 = 3 + 4 = 4 + 3
Strophe 2 Total, v. 4-5		<u>14 = 7 + 7 = 4 + 10</u>
Total, v. 1-5		<u>34 = 17 + 17 = 24 + 10</u>
6	בְּדַבַּר יְהוָה שָׁמַיִם נַעֲשׂוּ [^] וּבְרוּחַ פִּי כָל־צְבָאִים: Total, v. 6	4 4 4 <u>4 4 4</u> 8 = 4 + 4 = 8 + 0
Total, v. 4-6		<u>22 = 11 + 11 = 12 + 10</u>
7	כִּנֹּס כִּנְד מִי הַיָּם [^] נָתַן בְּאֶצְרוֹת תְּהוֹמוֹת: Total, v. 7	4 4 4 <u>3 3</u> 7 = 4 + 3 = 0 + 7
Strophe 3 Total, v. 6-7		<u>15 = 8 + 7 = 8 + 7</u>
Canticle I.2 Total, v. 4-7		<u>29 = 15 + 14 = 12 + 7</u>
Total, v. 1-7		<u>49 = 25 + 24 = 32 + 17</u>
8	יִירָאוּ מִיְהוָה כָּל־הָאָרְצִים [^] מִמָּנּוּ וַיְגֹדּוּ כָל־יֹשְׁבֵי תְּבֵל: Total, v. 8	4 4 4 <u>5 5 5</u> 9 = 4 + 5 = 9 + 0
9	כִּי הוּא אָמַר וַיְהִי [^] הוֹאֲצִיָּה וַיַּעֲמֹד: Total, v. 9	4 4 4 <u>3 3</u> 7 = 4 + 3 = 0 + 7
Strophe 4 Total, v. 8-9		<u>16 = 8 + 8 = 9 + 7</u>
10	יְהוָה הַפִּיר עֲצַת־גּוֹיִם [^] הֵנִיא מִחֲשָׁבוֹת עַמִּים: Total, v. 10	4 4 4 <u>3 3 3</u> 7 = 4 + 3 = 7 + 0
11	17 middle words: עֲצַת יְהוָה לְעוֹלָם תַּעֲמֹד [^] מִחֲשָׁבוֹת לְבוֹ לְדָר וָדָר: 161 = 72 + 17 + 72	4 4 4 <u>4 4 4</u> 8 = 4 + 4 = 8 + 0
2 middle verselines: 10 + 2 + 10 Total, v. 11		<u>8 = 4 + 4 = 8 + 0</u>
12	אֲשֶׁרִי הַגּוֹי אֲשֶׁר־יְהוָה אֱלֹהָיו אֲשֶׁרִי אֲשֶׁרִי 4 middle cola: 20+4+20 לֹא לְנַחֲלָה לּוֹ: אֲשֶׁרִי = 52 Total, v. 12	5 5 2 3 <u>4 4 4</u> 9 = 5 + 4 = 6 + 3
(1+21+20+10 = 52) Total, v. 11-12		<u>17 = 9 + 8 = 14 + 3</u>
Strophe 5 Total, v. 10-12		<u>24 = 13 + 11 = 21 + 3</u>
Canticle I.3 Total, v. 8-12		<u>40 = 21 + 19 = 30 + 10</u>
Canto I Total, v. 1-12		<u>89 = 46 + 43 = 62 + 27</u>
13	מִשְׁמַיִם הִבִּיט יְהוָה [^] רָאָה אֶת־כָּל־בְּנֵי הָאָדָם: Total, v. 13	3 3 3 <u>5 5 5</u> 8 = 3 + 5 = 8 + 0
Total, v. 12-13		<u>17 = 8 + 9 = 14 + 3</u>
Total, v. 10-13		<u>32 = 16 + 16 = 29 + 3</u>

14	מִמְכוֹן־שִׁבְתוֹ הַשְּׁנִיחָ־ אֶל כָּל־יֹשְׁבֵי הָאָרֶץ׃	3 3 3 4 4 4	
	Total, v. 14	7 = 3 + 4 = 7 + 0	
15	הַיֵּצֵר יַחַד לְבָם־ הַמְּבִין אֶל־כָּל־מַעֲשֵׂיהֶם׃	3 3 3 4 4 4	
	Total, v. 15	7 = 3 + 4 = 0 + 7	
	Canticle II.1 Strophe 6 Total, v. 13-15	22 = 9 + 13 = 15 + 7	
	Total, v. 12-15	31 = 14 + 17 = 21 + 10	
	Total, v. 8-15	62 = 30 + 32 = 45 + 17	
16	אִין־תְּמַלֵּךְ נוֹשֵׁעַ בְּרַב־חַיִּל־ גְּבוּר לֹא־יִנְצֵל בְּרַב־כַּחַ׃	5 5 5 5 5 5	
	Total, v. 16	10 = 5 + 5 = 10 + 0	
17	שִׁקְר הַפּוֹס לְתַשׁוּעָה־ וּבְרַב חַיִּלוֹ לֹא יִמְלֹט׃	3 3 3 4 4 4	
	Total, v. 17	7 = 3 + 4 = 7 + 0	
	Strophe 7 Total, v. 16-17	17 = 8 + 9 = 17 + 0	
	Total, v. 13-17	39 = 17 + 22 = 32 + 7	
	Total, v. 1-17	128 = 63 + 65 = 94 + 34	
18	הִנֵּה עֵין יְהוָה אֶל־יִרְאִיו־ לְמִנְחָלִים לְחֶסְדּוֹ׃	5 5 5 2 2 2	
	Total, v. 18	7 = 5 + 2 = 7 + 0	
19	לְהַצִּיל מִמּוֹת נַפְשָׁם־ וּלְחַיּוֹתָם בְּרָעַב׃	3 3 3 2 2 2	
	Total, v. 19	5 = 3 + 2 = 0 + 5	
	Strophe 8 Total, v. 18-19	12 = 8 + 4 = 7 + 5	
	Canticle II.2 Total, v. 16-19	29 = 16 + 13 = 24 + 5	
20	נַפְשֵׁנוּ חִבְתָּהּ לִיהוָה־ עֲזָרְנוּ וּמְגִנְנוּ הוּא׃	3 3 3 3 3 3	
	Total, v. 20	6 = 3 + 3 = 6 + 0	
21	כִּי־בּו יִשְׁמַח לְבִנּוֹ־ כִּי בְשֵׁם קְדָשׁוֹ בְּטָחָנוּ׃	4 4 4 4 4 4	
	Total, v. 21	8 = 4 + 4 = 8 + 0	
	Total, v. 18-21	26 = 15 + 11 = 21 + 5	
	Words spoken about God: v. 1-21	154 = 78 + 76 = 115 + 39	
22	Coda יְהִי־חֶסֶדְךָ יְהוָה עָלֵינוּ־ כַּאֲשֶׁר יַחַלְנוּ לָךְ׃	4 4 4 3 3 3	
	7 words addressed to God	7 = 4 + 3 = 4 + 3	
	Canticle II.3 Strophe 9 Total, v. 20-22	21 = 11 + 10 = 18 + 3	
	Canto II Total, v. 13-22	72 = 36 + 36 = 57 + 15	
	Total, v. 10-22	96 = 49 + 47 = 78 + 18	
	Total, v. 1-22:	161 = 82 + 79 = 119 + 42	

Observations

1. In terms of the 161 words of the psalm, the middle word is the key-word **אֲשֶׁרִי**, 'happy', the first word of v. 12 (80 + 1 + 80). The pivotal word **אֲשֶׁרִי** is positioned precisely at the centre of the middle **17** words in vs. 11-12 (**17** = 8 + 1 + 8), which constitute the meaningful centre of the psalm on word level (161 = 72 + **17** + 72):

עֲצַת יְהוָה לְעוֹלָם תִּעֲמֹד ^ מִחֲשָׁבוֹת לְבוֹ לְדָר לְדָר:
אֲשֶׁרִי הַגּוֹי אֲשֶׁר־יְהוָה אֱלֹהָיוּ הָעַם בָּחַר לְנַחֲלָה לוֹ:

The counsel of YHWH stands forever / the designs of his heart are for all generations.
Happy is the nation whose God is YHWH // the people he has chosen as his heritage.

The meaningful centre coincides precisely with the 2 middle verselines (22 = 10 + 2 + 10), and with the 4 middle cola (44 = 20 + 4 + 20), which means that the rhetorical framework buttresses the meaningful centre on word level.

It appears to be very appropriate, being a statement of faith in a psalm celebrating the blessed fact that YHWH is the God of Israel.

For the significance of the key-word **אֲשֶׁרִי** as the very first word of Psalm 1 and 41, see Observation 3 in my Analysis of [Psalm 1](#), and Observation 2 in that of [Psalm 41](#).

Note also that there is another pivotal beatitude in the Psalter, namely in Psalm 94 (with v. 12 (!) as the meaningful centre). See my Analysis of [Psalm 94](#), Observation 1.

2. Since the psalm is made up of 22 verselines with 44 cola, it was clearly designed to prelude the next psalm, which is an alphabetic acrostic. As I have explained in the Analysis of [Psalm 10](#) (Observation 2), the meaningful centre of an alphabetic poem with 22 verselines (and 44 cola) is either constituted by the 11th or the 12th verseline, or by both (as here). See also “The alphabetic acrostics” in the General Introduction.
3. The psalm is not a prayer but a *discourse about* God (vs. 1-21), except for the **7** words at the end, which are directly *addressed to him* (v. 22, which is clearly a coda). This sudden change in the direction of address divides the **161** words into **154** (7 x 22) spoken about God, and **7** spoken to him. The deliberate use of the number of fullness, **7**, is corroborated by the fact that many verselines are made up of **7** words and that there are **119** (7 x 17) words in the main clauses and **42** (6 x 7) in the subordinate clauses – see Observation 4.
4. In light of this, let us have a closer look at the particularly regular structure of the psalm. As shown above, the 161 words divide into 80 words before, and 80 after the pivotal word **אֲשֶׁרִי**. This is in accordance with Van der Lugt’s canto division:

Canto I, vs. 1-11	11 verselines with 22 cola and 80 words
Canto II, vs. 12-22	11 verselines with 22 cola and 1 + 80 words.

He finds 4 Canticles and 10 strophes divided into a perfectly symmetrical pattern:

Canticle I.1 (vs. 1-7)	3 strophes	7 verselines	16 cola
Canticle I.2 (vs. 8-11)	2 strophes	4 verselines	8 cola
Canticle II.1 (vs. 12-15)	2 strophes	4 verselines	8 cola
Canticle II.2 (vs. 16-22)	3 strophes	7 verselines	16 cola.

The only problem is that Van der Lugt’s strophic structure is in tension with the thought content. See his discussion of the problem, *CAS*, pp. 331-332. In my opinion, there are no caesurae between vs. 11||12 and 13||14 because v. 12 cannot be separated from vs. 10-11, neither can v. 13 be separated from vs. 14-15.

Therefore, I agree with Fokkelman (and Duhm, Calès, Böhl and Gahler), who take vs. 10-12 and 13-15 as indivisible literary units: Strophes 5 and 6.

5. Psalm 33 is one of the eight psalms in Book I in which the division of words into the categories 'main clause' and 'subordinate clause' gives a specific numerical structure to the poem (1, 5, 6, 14, 30, 31, 33, 38). In this case: **119 (7 x 17)** words in the main clauses, and **42 (6 x 7)** in the subordinate clauses. Psalm 1 is the very first of this type – see the [General Introduction](#), “The criteria for logotechnical analysis”, under “Division of the text into different categories”.*
6. The two divine name numbers (especially **17**) feature in the following instances:

vs. 1-5	34 words, divided by atnach into 17 + 17
vs. 1-7	17 words in the subordinate clauses
vs. 6-9	17 words in the main clauses
vs. 10-12	17 words in the main clauses
vs. 11-12	17 pivotal words constituting the meaningful centre
vs. 12-13	17 words in total
vs. 8-15	17 words in the subordinate clauses
vs. 12-15	17 words after atnach
vs. 16-17	17 words in total
vs. 13-17	17 words before atnach
vs. 18-21	26 words, with 15 before and 11 after atnach
vs. 1-21	78 (3 x 26) words before atnach, spoken about God
vs. 10-22	78 (3 x 26) words in the main clauses
vs. 1-22	119 (7 x 17) words in the main clauses.
7. The name יהוה occurs **13** times; the word אֱלֹהִים, ‘God’, appears only in v. 12a.

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* The subordinate clauses can be detected easily (see column d): the two verselines introduced by the conjunction וְ (4 and 9); the four clauses introduced by *participia* (5a, 7a, 7b, 15a, 15b), the two לְ + infinitive clauses (19a and 19b), and the two אֲשֶׁר clauses (12a and 22b). Note that in v. 21a-b the particle וְ does not function as a conjunction introducing a subordinate clause, but as an emphasizing particle: 'yes', introducing a main clause. In my logotechnical analysis of the Book of Deuteronomy I encountered a great number of instances in which it is crucial to differentiate between וְ as conjunction and as emphasizing particle.