

# 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	
	בְּנֶבֶל 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
	<b>Canticle I.1 Strophe 1 Total, v. 1-3</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>= 10</b>	<b>+ 10</b>	<b>= 20</b>	<b>+ 0</b>

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

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	
	<b>Canticle II.1 Strophe 6 Total, v. 13-15</b>	<b>22 = 9 + 13 = 15 + 7</b>	
	Total, v. 12-15	31 = 14 + 17 = 21 + 10	
	Total, v. 8-15	62 = 30 + 32 = 45 + 17	
16	אִין־תְּמַלֵּךְ נוֹשָׁע 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	
	<b>Strophe 7 Total, v. 16-17</b>	<b>17 = 8 + 9 = 17 + 0</b>	
	Total, v. 13-17	39 = 17 + 22 = 32 + 7	
	Total, v. 1-17	128 = 63 + 65 = 94 + 34	
18	הִנֵּה עֵין יְהוָה אֶל־יִרְאָיו־ 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	
	<b>Strophe 8 Total, v. 18-19</b>	<b>12 = 8 + 4 = 7 + 5</b>	
	<b>Canticle II.2 Total, v. 16-19</b>	<b>29 = 16 + 13 = 24 + 5</b>	
20	נַפְשֵׁנוּ חִבְתָּהּ לִיהוָה־ עֲזָרְנוּ וּמְגִנְנוּ הוּא׃	3 3 3 3 3 3	
	Total, v. 20	6 = 3 + 3 = 6 + 0	
21	כִּי־בו 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	<b>Coda</b> יְהִי־חֶסֶדְךָ יְהוָה עָלֵינוּ־ כַּאֲשֶׁר יַחַלְנוּ לָךְ׃	4 4 4 3 3 3	
	7 words addressed to God Total, v. 22	7 = 4 + 3 = 4 + 3	
	<b>Canticle II.3 Strophe 9 Total, v. 20-22</b>	<b>21 = 11 + 10 = 18 + 3</b>	
	<b>Canto II Total, v. 13-22</b>	<b>72 = 36 + 36 = 57 + 15</b>	
	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 לְדֹר וָדֹר:  
**אֲשֶׁרִי** הַגּוֹי אֲשֶׁר־יְהוָה אֱלֹהָיו ^ הָעָם בָּחַר לְנַחֲלָה לּוֹ:

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 11<sup>th</sup> or the 12<sup>th</sup> 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	<b>34</b> words, divided by atnach into <b>17 + 17</b>
vs. 1-7	<b>17</b> words in the subordinate clauses
vs. 6-9	<b>17</b> words in the main clauses
vs. 10-12	<b>17</b> words in the main clauses
vs. 11-12	<b>17</b> pivotal words constituting the meaningful centre
vs. 12-13	<b>17</b> words in total
vs. 8-15	<b>17</b> words in the subordinate clauses
vs. 12-15	<b>17</b> words after atnach
vs. 16-17	<b>17</b> words in total
vs. 13-17	<b>17</b> words before atnach
vs. 18-21	<b>26</b> words, with <b>15</b> before and <b>11</b> after atnach
vs. 1-21	<b>78 (3 x 26)</b> words before atnach, spoken about God
vs. 10-22	<b>78 (3 x 26)</b> words in the main clauses
vs. 1-22	<b>119 (7 x 17)</b> 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.