

# Psalm 35— 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 35

- The psalm divides into two equal halves, vs. 1-14 and 15-28, with 7 strophes, 35 cola and 114 words each. Despite this, it has a tripartite structure determined by the direction of address: vs. 1-8, 9-6, and 17-28. See Observation 3.
- Its meaningful centre on word level (vs. 14a-15b) coincides with the 4 middle cola.
- The apparent use of **7**, both in the number of strophes and cola, and of the words addressed to God, demonstrates the structuring role of the number of fullness.

## 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, 21-22 | 23-25, 26, 27-28 (2 cantos with 14 strophes, 31 verselines and 70 cola).
- Fokkelman: 1-3, 4, 5-6 | 7-8, 9-10 || 11-12, 13-14, 15-16 | 17-18, 19-21 || 22-23, 24-25 (3 stanzas with 14 strophes, 32 verselines and 72 cola, taking v. 15 as two bicola, and v. 25 as a tricolon).
- Labuschagne: 1-3, 4, 5-6, 7-8 || 9-10, 11-12, 13-14, 15-16 || 17-18, 19-20, 21-22 | 23-25, 26, 27-28 (3 cantos defined by the direction of address, with 14 strophes, 31 verselines and 70 cola).
- For an overview of other divisions of the text, see Van der Lugt, CAS, Psalm 35, § 6.

## Logotechnical analysis

- Columns **a** and **b** show the number of words before and after the atnach.
- Column **c**: words addressed to God; **d**: words in the speaker's contemplation.
- The numbering of the verselines is shown in **brown**.

		Total	a	b	c	d
1	לְדוֹדְךָ הַיְיָ	1 = 1				
	1 רִיבָה יְהוָה אֶת־רִיבִי	4	4		4	
	לְחֵם אֶת־לֶחְמִי:	3		3	3	
	Total, v. 1	7 = 4 + 3			7 + 0	
2	2 הַחֲזֹק מִגֵּן וְצַנְהָה	3	3		3	
	וְקוֹמָה בְּעֹזֶרְתִּי:	2		2	2	
	Total, v. 2	5 = 3 + 2			5 + 0	
3	3 וְהִרְקַח חַיִּית וְסֹגֵר לְקִרְאֵת רֹדְפָי	5	5		5	
	אָמַר לְנַפְשִׁי	2		2	2	
	יִשְׁעֶתְךָ אֲנִי:	2		2	2	
	Total, v. 3	9 = 5 + 4			9 + 0	
	Total, v. 2-3	14 = 8 + 6			14 + 0	
	<b>Strophe 1</b> Total, v. 1-3	21 = 12 + 9			21 + 0	

4	יבשו ויכלמו	4	2	2	2
	מבקשי נפשי		2	2	2
	יפגו אָחור ויחפרו <sup>א</sup> (6+10+8+17+20+6=67)	5		3	3
	חשבי רעתי:		2	2	2
	Strophe 2	Total, v. 4	9	= 7 + 2	= 9 + 0
5	יהיו כמזן לפני רוח <sup>א</sup>	6	4	4	4
	ומלאך יהנה דוחה:		3	3	3
	Total, v. 5		7	= 4 + 3	= 7 + 0
6	יהי דרכם חשך וחלק לקות <sup>א</sup>	7	4	4	4
	ומלאך יהנה לרפם:		3	3	3
	Total, v. 6		7	= 4 + 3	= 7 + 0
	Strophe 3	Total, v. 5-6	14	= 8 + 6	= 14 + 0
	Total, v. 4-6		23	= 15 + 8	= 23 + 0
	Total, v. 1-6		44	= 27 + 17	= 44 + 0
7	כי חנם טמנו לי שחת רשתם <sup>א</sup>	8	6	6	6
	חנם חפרו לנפשי:		3	3	6
	Total, v. 7		9	= 6 + 3	= 9 + 0
	Total, v. 5-7		23	= 14 + 9	= 23 + 0
	Total, v. 4-7		32	= 21 + 11	= 32 + 0
8	תבואהו שאה לא ידע	9	4	4	4
	ורשתו אשר טמן תלכדיו		4	4	4
	בשואה יפל־בה:		3	3	4
	Total, v. 8		11	= 8 + 3	= 11 + 0
	Strophe 4	Total, v. 7-8	20	= 14 + 12	= 20 + 0
	Total, v. 4-8		43	= 29 + 14	= 43 + 0
	Canto I	Total, v. 1-8	64	= 41 + 23	= 64 + 0
9	ונפשי תגיל ביהנה <sup>א</sup>	10	3	3	3
	תשיש בישועתו:		2	2	2
10	כל עצמותי תאמרנה	11	3	3	3
	יהנה מי כמוך		3	3	3
	מציל עני מחזק ממנו <sup>א</sup>	12	4	4	4
	ועני ואביון מגזלו:		3	3	3
	Strophe 5	Total, v. 9-10	18	= 13 + 5	= 0 + 18
11	יקומו עדי חמס <sup>א</sup>	13	3	3	3
	אשר לא ידעתי ושאלוני:		4	4	4
	Total, v. 11		7	= 3 + 4	= 0 + 7
12*	ישלמוני רעה תחת טובה	14	4	4	4
	[שכול] שכו לנפשי:		2	2	2
	Total, v. 12		6	= 6 + 0	= 0 + 6
	Strophe 6	Total, v. 11-12	13	= 9 + 4	= 0 + 13
	Total, v. 1-12		95	= 63 + 32	= 64 + 31
13	ואני בחלותם לבושי שק	15	4	4	4
	עניתו בצום נפשי <sup>א</sup>		3	3	3
	ותפלתי על־חיקי תשוב:		4	4	4
	Total, v. 13		11	= 7 + 4	= 0 + 11

14	Middle verseline Meaningful centre on word level: 228=106+16+106 Total, v. 14 and colon level: Strophe 7 Total, v. 13-14 70 = 33 + 4 + 33 Total, v. 11-14 First half of the psalm v. 1-14	16	4	4	4	4	4	8 = 4 + 4 = 0 + 8 19 = 11 + 8 = 0 + 19 32 = 20 + 12 = 0 + 32 114 = 74 + 40 = 64 + 50
15	ובצלעי שמחו ונאספו נאספו עלי נכים ולא ידעתי קרעו ולא דדמו: Total, v. 15	17	3	3	3	3	3	11 = 8 + 3 = 0 + 11
16	בחנפי לעני מעוגה חרק עלי שנימו: Total, v. 16 Strophe 8 Total, v. 15-16 Canto II Total, v. 9-16	18	3	3	3	3	3	6 = 3 + 3 = 0 + 6 17 = 11 + 6 = 0 + 17 36 = 22 + 14 = 0 + 36 67 = 44 + 23 = 0 + 67
17	אדני כמה תראה השיבה נפשי משאיהם מכפירים יחידתי: Total, v. 17	19	3	3	3	3	3	8 = 6 + 2 = 8 + 0
18	אודה בקהל רב בעם עצום אהללך: Total, v. 18 Strophe 9 Total, v. 17-18 Total, v. 1-18	20	3	3	3	3	3	6 = 3 + 3 = 6 + 0 14 = 9 + 5 = 14 + 0 145 = 94 + 51 = 78 + 67
19	אל ישמחו לי איבי שקרא שנאי חנם יקרצו עין: Total, v. 19	21	5	5	5	5	5	9 = 5 + 4 = 9 + 0
20	כי לא שלום ידברו ועל רגעי ארץ דברי מרמות יחשבון: Total, v. 20 Strophe 10 Total, v. 19-20	22	4	4	4	4	4	10 = 7 + 3 = 10 + 0 19 = 12 + 7 = 19 + 0
21	וירחיבו עלי פיהם אמרו האח האח ראתה עינינו: Total, v. 21	23	3	3	3	3	3	8 = 6 + 2 = 8 + 0
22	ראתה יהודה אל תחרש אדני אל תרחק ממני: Total, v. 22 Strophe 11 Total, v. 21-22 Cantic III.1 Total, v. 19-22	24	4	4	4	4	4	8 = 4 + 4 = 8 + 0 16 = 8 + 8 = 16 + 0 35 = 22 + 13 = 35 + 0

23	הַעִירָה וְהִקְיָצָה לְמִשְׁפָּטֶיָּהּ אֱלֹהֵי נְאֻדָּנִי לְרִיבִי: Total, v. 23	25	3	3	3	3	3	3	6 = 3 + 3 = 6 + 0
24	שָׁפְטֵנִי כְּדָקָה יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי וְאֶל־יִשְׁמְחוּ־לִי: Total, v. 24	26	4	4	4	3	3	3	7 = 7 + 0 = 7 + 0
25	אֶל־יֹאמְרוּ בְלִבָּם הָאֵחַ נִפְשָׁנוּ אֶל־יֹאמְרוּ בְלִעְנוֹהוּ: Total, v. 25	27	5	5	5	3	3	3	8 = 5 + 3 = 8 + 0
	<b>Strophe 12</b>	<b>Total, v. 23-25</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>= 15</b>	<b>+ 6</b>	<b>= 21</b>	<b>+ 0</b>		
26	יִבְשׁוּ וַיִּחְפְּרוּ יַחְדָּו (6+10+8+17+20+6=67) שִׁמְחֵי רַעְתִּי Compare v. 4	28	3	3	3	2	2	2	
	<b>Strophe 13</b>	<b>Total, v. 26</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>= 8</b>	<b>+ 2</b>	<b>= 10</b>	<b>+ 0</b>		
		<b>Total, v. 17-26</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>= 54</b>	<b>+ 26</b>	<b>= 80</b>	<b>+ 0</b>		
27	יָרֵנוּ וַיִּשְׁמְחוּ חֲפָצֵי צִדְקָךָ וַיֹּאמְרוּ תָמִיד יִגְדַל יְהוָה הַחֲפֵץ שְׁלוֹם עַבְדֶּיךָ: Total, v. 27	30	4	4	4	4	4	4	11 = 8 + 3 = 11 + 0
28	וּלְשׁוֹנֵי תְהַנְּה צִדְקָךָ כָּל־הַיּוֹם תְּהַלְּלֶנּוּ: Total, v. 28	31		3	3	3	3	3	6 = 3 + 3 = 6 + 0
	<b>Strophe 14</b>	<b>Total, v. 27-28</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>= 11</b>	<b>+ 6</b>	<b>= 17</b>	<b>+ 0</b>		
	<b>Canticle III.2</b>	<b>Total, v. 24-28</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>= 34</b>	<b>+ 14</b>	<b>= 48</b>	<b>+ 0</b>		
	<b>Canto III</b>	<b>Total, v. 17-28</b>	<b>97</b>	<b>= 65</b>	<b>+ 32</b>	<b>= 97</b>	<b>+ 0</b>		
	<b>Second half of the psalm</b>	<b>v. 15-28</b>	<b>114</b>	<b>= 76</b>	<b>+ 38</b>	<b>= 97</b>	<b>+ 17</b>		
		<b>Total, v. 1-28</b>	<b>228</b>	<b>= 150</b>	<b>+ 78</b>	<b>= 161</b>	<b>+ 67</b>		
		<b>With the heading, v. 1-28</b>	<b>229</b>	<b>= 151</b>	<b>+ 78</b>				

\* In v. 12b there is a dittography, probably caused by the reference in v. 14b to 'one who laments his mother'. So I read שָׁכְנוּ, 'they lie in wait', instead of שָׁכְלוּ - see BHS. For fresh arguments in defence of MT, see J.G. Janzen, "The root škl and the Soul Bereaved in Psalm 35", JSOT 65 (1995), p. 55-69. I disagree with H. Bardtke, the editor of the Psalms in BHS, who rearranged the text in v. 14 and moved the *soph pasuq* of v. 13 to a position after כָּאֵחַ לִי in v. 14. This emendation disturbs the compositional formula of the whole poem, which has 78 (3 x 26) words after atnach.

## Observations

1. In search of a meaningful centre on word level, we find the 2 middle words to be the last word of v. 14 and the first word of v. 15, but they are anything but meaningful. However, the 16 middle words (vs. 14-15b) may be considered the meaningful centre (228 = 106 + 16 + 106). It coincides precisely with the 4 middle cola (70 = 33 + 4 + 33), which means that the poetical structure underscores their pivotal position.

כָּרַע־כָּאֵחַ לִי הִתְהַלַּכְתִּי כְּאֶבְל־אֵם קָדַר שְׁחוֹתִי:  
וּבְצַלְעֵי שְׁמֹחוּ וַנֹּאסְפוּ נֹאסְפוּ עָלַי נָכִים וְלֹא יָדַעְתִּי

I walked, bowed in grief as if for a brother // as one who laments his mother, bowed down in mourning.

But when I stumbled, they crowded round rejoicing, unknown assailants crowded against me.

2. In the heading, some text-traditions read מְזִמּוֹר לְדָוִד, instead of לְדָוִד (see *BHS*), which brings the total number of words to **230** (10 x **23**). It may be sheer coincidence, but the **230** words of the entire text divide into 97 + **36** + 97, with [vs. 13-16](#) at the arithmetic centre. The addition of an extra word strongly suggests that this was deliberately done (by some scribes at an unknown stage) to position the **36** words of vs. 13-16 at the centre, which they may have considered to be a still better meaningful centre.
3. As in in many psalms and particularly in Psalms 31, 32 and 36, the direction of address determines the canto structure, which means that there are hard breaks in the text between vs. 8||9 and vs. 16||17:

Canto I, Strophes 1-4, vs. 1-8	Words addressed to God
Canto II, Strophes 5-8, vs. 9-16	Words spoken about God
Canto III, Strophes 9-14, vs. 17-28	Words addressed to God. <sup>1</sup>

The word-count reveals that there are **67** words spoken about God in Canto II, which is significant, because **67** represents the numerical value of נִיחָפְרוּ, 'and let them be ashamed' (6+10+8+17+20+6 = **67**), occurring in vs. 4c and 26a. If deliberately devised, this number may buttress the scope of Canto II.

Van der Lugt and other scholars (see *CAS*, § 35.2 and § 35.7) do not take the direction of address into consideration and find a different tripartite canto structure, which is based on thematic considerations:

Canto I, Strophes 1-5, vs. 1-10	5 strophes	Prayer for deliverance
Canto II, Strophes 6-9, vs. 11-18	4 strophes	Description of distress
Canto III, Strophes 10-14, vs. 19-28	5 strophes	Summary of Cantos I-II.

It is hard to decide which canto division should be regarded as having priority over other divisions. In my judgement, however, a canto framework determined by the direction of address should always take precedence over one defined by other considerations. Whatever the case may be, the caesurae caused by the change in the direction of address should never be ignored. As a rule, it marks the boundary between verselines, strophes or cantos, but in some cases it functions only as an attention drawing device. Of the latter, [Psalm 23](#) and [Psalm 26](#) are good examples, where it occurs in the middle of a coherent strophe. In Psalm 27, it is to be found in v. 10 at the end of a Canticle, vs. 7-10. Last but not least, in a great number of psalms it marks the coda at the end of the psalm. For an overview, see the Introduction.

4. The divine name numbers feature in the following instances:
  - vs. 1-6    **17** words after atnach
  - vs. 15-16    **17** words in total
  - vs. 1-18    **51** (3 x **17**) words after atnach
  - vs. 1-18    **78** (3 x **26**) words addressed to God
  - vs. 17-26    **26** words after atnach

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<sup>1</sup> Van der Lugt takes the **5** words in v. 9 as spoken *about* God, which implies that the 3 words in v. 10a are addressed to God. In my judgement, however, the **8** words in [vs. 9-10a](#) are spoken *about* God, while the 10 words of v. 10b-d are addressed *to* God. Moreover, these 10 words are not directly addressed to God, but *cited* by the speaker as words spoken by his bones! This means that the entire section in vs. 9-16 are spoken *about* God. Compare the status of the words *cited* by the speaker in Ps. 32:5c – see Observation 2 in my Analysis of [Psalm 32](#).

vs. 27-28 **17** words in total  
 vs. 23-28 **34** (2 x **17**) words before atnach  
 vs. 1-28 **78** (3 x **26**) words after atnach.

The **8** occurrences of the divine name numbers are accompanied by **8** occurrences of the *kabod* numbers **23** and **32**, of which some may be a matter of coincidence:

vs. 4-6 **23** words in total  
 vs. 5-7 **23** words in total  
 vs. 4-7 **32** words in total  
 vs. 1-8 **64** (2 x **32**) words in total, with **23** after atnach  
 vs. 1-12 **32** words after atnach  
 vs. 11-14 **32** words in total  
 vs. 11-18 **23** words after atnach.

5. In addition to the appearance of the number of fullness in the **14** (**7 + 7**) strophes and the **70** (**35 + 35**) cola, it features also conspicuously in v. 1, vs. 2-3, vs. 17-18, in the **63** (**9 x 7**) words of vs. 11-18, the **35** words of vs. 19-22, the **21** words of vs. 22-24 and the **161** (**23 x 7**) words addressed to God (Column c). Note that the words cited by the speaker in v. 10b-d are not directly addressed to God; they form part of the speaker's contemplation. See the footnote above.
6. The name יהוה occurs 8 times, which brings the total number of occurrences in Psalms 29-35 to **78** (3 x **26**). See the General Introduction, under "The name YHWH woven into the fabric of the text", and Table I in the Introduction to Book I. The designation אֱלֹהֵי occurs 3 times (vs. 17, 22, 23), and אֱלֹהֵי twice (vs. 23 and 24).

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