

# Psalm 36— 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 36

- Given its form and content, Psalm 36 is the follow-up to Psalm 35, with which it has many traits in common. The remarkable reference to David as *YHWH's servant* in the heading, which is clearly based on Ps. 35:27c, is an additional demonstration of the close connection between the two poems.
- As in Psalm 35, the author differentiates between words specifically addressed to God (Column **c**) and words spoken about him (Column **d**). He deliberately used **52** (2 x **26**) words to emphasize the words directly addressed to God.
- The central strophe, **vs. 6-7**, which constitutes the meaningful centre, is significantly delimited by the 2 occurrences of the name YHWH functioning as a device for *inclusion*.

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

- Van der Lugt: 2-3, 4-5, 6-7 || 8-10, 11-13 (2 cantos, 5 strophes, 12 verselines, **26** cola).
- Fokkelman: 2-3, 4-5 || 6-7, 8-9 || 10-11, 12-13 (3 stanzas with 6 strophes 12 verselines and **26** cola, taking vs. 8-9, 10-11 and 12-13 as 2-verseline strophes).
- Labuschagne: 2-3, 4-5 || 6-7, 8-10 || 11-13 (3 cantos – as in Psalm 35 - with 5 strophes, 12 verselines and **26** cola, taking v. 13 as a coda within the last strophe).
- For an overview of other divisions of the text, see Van der Lugt, *CAS*, Psalm 36, § 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 spoken about God.
- The numbering of the verselines is shown in **brown**.

		Total	a	b	c	d
1	Heading, v. 1 לְמִנְצַח לְעַבְד־יְהוָה לְדָוִד :	4	4			
2	נֶאֱמַר-פֶּשַׁע לְרָשָׁע בְּקִרְבִּי לְבֵי אִין-פֶּחַד אֱלֹהִים לְגֹדַר עֵינָיו :	5	5	5		5
	Total, v. 2	10	= 5	+ 5	= 0	+ 10
3	כִּי-הֶחֱלִיק אֱלֹו בְּעֵינָיו לְמִצָּא עֹונוֹ לְשֹׁנָא :	4	4	3		4
	Total, v. 3	7	= 4	+ 3	= 0	+ 7
	<b>Strophe 1</b> Total, v. 2-3	17	= 9	+ 8	= 0	+ 17
4	דְּבַר־יְפִיו אֶוּן וּמִרְמָה חֶדְלִל לְהַשְׁכִּיל לְהִישִׁיב :	4	4	3		4
	Total, v. 4	7	= 4	+ 3	= 0	+ 7
5	אֶוּן וַיִּחַשֵׁב עַל-מִשְׁכָּבוֹ יִתְנַצֵּב עַל-דָּרְךָ לֹא-טוֹבָה רַע לֹא יִמָּאָס :	4	4	5		4
	Total, v. 5	12	= 9	+ 3	= 0	+ 12
	<b>Strophe 2</b> Total, v. 4-5	19	= 13	+ 6	= 0	+ 19
	<b>Canto I</b> Total, v. 2-5	36	= 22	+ 14	= 0	+ 36

6	Meaningful centre:	יְהוָה בְּהַשְׁמִים חִסְדֵּךָ <sup>^</sup>	5	3	3	3
	Middle strophe, vs. 6-7:	אֲמוֹנַתְךָ עַד־שִׁחְקִים:		3		3
7	Middle cola: 12+2+12	צִדְקַתְךָ כְּתֹרֵי־אֵל	6	3	3	3
	Six middle words:	מִשְׁפָּטָה תְּהוֹם רַבָּה <sup>^</sup>		3	3	3
	96 = 45 + 6 + 45 :	אָדָם־וּבְתִמָּה תוֹשִׁיעַ יְהוָה:		4	4	4
	<b>Strophe 3</b>	<b>Total, v. 6-7</b>		<u>16 = 9 + 7 = 16 + 0</u>		
		<b>Total, v. 2-7</b>		<u>52 = 31 + 21 = 16 + 36</u>		
8		מִה־יִקָּר חִסְדֵּךָ אֱלֹהִים	7	4	4	4
		וּבְנֵי אָדָם <sup>^</sup>		2	2	2
		בְּצַל כְּנֹפֶיךָ יַחְסִינִן:		3	3	3
		<b>Total, v. 8</b>		<u>9 = 6 + 3 = 9 + 0</u>		
9		יִרְוֶן מִדְּשֵׁן בֵּיתְךָ <sup>^</sup>	8	3	3	3
		וְנַחַל עֲדֻנְיָה תִשְׁקָם:		3	3	3
		<b>Total, v. 9</b>		<u>6 = 3 + 3 = 6 + 0</u>		
10		כִּי־עַמָּה מְקוֹר תִּיִּם <sup>^</sup>	9	4	4	4
		בְּאוֹרְךָ נִרְאֶה־אוֹר:		3	3	3
		<b>Total, v. 10</b>		<u>7 = 4 + 3 = 7 + 0</u>		
	<b>Strophe 4</b>	<b>Total, v. 8-10</b>		<u>22 = 13 + 9 = 22 + 0</u>		
	<b>Canto II</b>	<b>Total, v. 6-10</b>		<u>38 = 22 + 16 = 38 + 0</u>		
11		מִשְׁךָ חִסְדֵּךָ לִי־עֵידָה <sup>^</sup>	10	3	3	3
		וּצִדְקַתְךָ לִישְׂרָיִל־לֵב:		3	3	3
		<b>Total, v. 11</b>		<u>6 = 3 + 3 = 6 + 0</u>		
12		אֶל־תְּבוֹאֲנֵי רִגְלֵי גְּאֻהָה <sup>^</sup>	11	4	4	4
		וַיִּדְרֹשׁעִים אֶל־תְּנַדְנִי:		4	4	4
		<b>Total, v. 12</b>		<u>8 = 4 + 4 = 8 + 0</u>		
		<b>Total, v. 6-12</b>		<u>52 = 29 + 23 = 52 + 0</u>		
13	<b>Coda</b>	שָׁם נִפְּלוּ פְּעָלֵי אֲוֶן <sup>^</sup>	12	4	4	4
		דַּחֲו וְלֹא־יִכְּלוּ קוֹם:		4	4	4
		<b>Total, v. 13</b>		<u>8 = 4 + 4 = 0 + 8</u>		
	<b>Strophe 5</b>	<b>Total, v. 11-13</b>		<u>22 = 11 + 11 = 14 + 8</u>		
	<b>Canto III</b>	<b>Total, v. 8-13</b>		<u>44 = 24 + 20 = 36 + 8</u>		
		<b>Total, v. 2-13</b>		<u>96 = 55 + 41 = 52 + 44</u>		
		With the heading, v. 1-13		100 = 59 + 41		

## Observations

1. In terms of the 96 words of the psalm, its arithmetic centre is constituted by the 6 words in v. 7b-c (96 = 45 + 6 + 45), embraced by 51 (3 x 17) words: 45 + 6 | 6 + 45. These 6 words are in themselves meaningful, but since the phrase is incomplete, it cannot qualify as a meaningful centre. The consciously designed meaningful centre is obviously the middle strophe, v. 6-7. Van der Lugt has pointed out that the middle strophe, the hymnic passage praising YHWH's unfailing love and righteousness, significantly begins and ends with the name YHWH - the only two occurrences of the divine name in the psalm! There is no doubt, in my opinion, that it functions as a device for *inclusion* to delimit and highlight this passage as the meaningful centre:

יְהוָה בְּתַשְׁמִים חֲסִדָּךְ אֱמוּנָתְךָ עַד-שָׁמַיִם: <sup>6</sup>  
צַדִּיקְךָ כְּתֵרֵי-אֵל מִשְׁפָּטְךָ תְּהוֹם רַבָּה אָדָם-וּבְהֵמָה תוֹשִׁיעַ יְהוָה: <sup>7</sup>

6 YHWH, your righteousness extends to heaven // your faithfulness to the clouds.

7 Your steadfast love is like the godly mountains, your justice like the great deep // man and beast you save, YHWH.

Additionally, the meaningful centre is positioned precisely at the boundary between the words spoken *about* God (vs. 2-5), and the words addressed to him (vs. 6-12). The sudden change in the direction of address effectively highlights the centre. For the use of this device for emphasizing the meaningful centre, see the General Introduction, “Special devices to highlight the meaningful centre”.

It may be mere coincidence, but these 16 words are made up of 68 (4 x 17) letters.

2. If we include the 4-word heading in the word-count – which is conspicuous, because of the reference to David as ‘YHWH’s servant’ (based on Ps. 35:27c!) – the 20 words of vs. 6-8a constitute the arithmetic centre of the entire text (100 = 40 + 20 + 40). These words were probably regarded by the scribe(s) responsible for the heading as a better meaningful centre than the 6-word centre of the psalm proper. However, their 20-word centre fades away when compared with vs. 6-7, the skilfully demarcated pivotal strophe, which constitutes the real meaningful centre of the psalm. We found a similar ‘improvement’ of the meaningful centre in Psalm 35. Compare Observation 1 in my Analysis of [Psalm 35](#).
3. In terms of the direction of address, there is a hard break in the text between vs. 5||6, and in terms of content, there is a natural caesura between vs. 10||11.

Vs. 2-5 contains a contemplation, in which the speaker does *not* address God;  
 vs. 6-10 is clearly a *hymn* directly addressed to God;  
 vs. 11-13 is a *prayer* for the continuation of his love and salvation.

This means that the psalm naturally divides into three cantos:

Canto I, Strophes 1-2, vs. 2-5    Contemplation about the sins of the wicked

Canto II, Strophes 3-4, vs. 6-10    Hymn on YHWH’s righteousness and love

Canto III, Strophe 5, vs. 11-13    Prayer for their continuation and for salvation.

In my opinion, as in Psalm 35, the change in the direction of address is of paramount importance, when it comes to defining the canto structure. See Observation 3 in my Analysis of [Psalm 35](#). For Van der Lugt’s 2-canto structure, see CAS, pp. 360ff.

I regard the 8-word statement in v. 13 as not directly addressed to God. The abrupt change from words addressed to God (vs. 6-12) to words in which God is not spoken to shows that it is a coda. Incidentally, it is made up of 26 letters. Compare the General Introduction, “The use of a coda as a device for conclusion”.

Taking v. 13 as not directly addressed to God also means that the psalm begins and ends with a contemplation enveloping the 52 words directly addressed to God in the following way:

vs. 2-5            36 words spoken about God  
vs. 6-12          52 words addressed to God  
v. 13              8 words spoken about God.

4. The divine name numbers occur in the following instances:

vs. 2-3            17 words in total  
vs. 2-7            52 (2 x 26) words in total  
vs. 6-12          52 (2 x 26) words in total addressed to God (Column c)  
vs. 2-13          26 cola.

5. As we have seen, in the psalm itself the name יהוה occurs only twice (vs. 6a and 7c), at the beginning and end of the meaningful centre. A third occurrence is to be found in the exceptional 4-word heading. The designation אֱלֹהִים, 'God', occurs twice (vs. 2b and 8a). The word אֱל in v. 7a is a superlative, as in [Ps. 80:11](#).

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