

# Psalm 40— 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 40

- Psalm 40 consists of two distinct parts, each having its own structure and meaningful centre. As it stands in MT, the two parts form an unmistakable structural unity with a common meaningful centre. The divine name number **26** was used to fuse two originally independent texts (vs. 2-13 and vs. 14-18) by adjusting the latter section to achieve exactly **182 (7 x 26)** words and **17** Masoretic verses in the entire text.
- The first section, vs. 2-13, has a pronounced symmetric structure, which is to a great extent determined by the numerical values of 3 keywords – see Observations 4 and 5.

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

- Van der Lugt: though he regards vs. 2-13 and 14-18 as two distinct psalms, he concludes that “a deliberate redaction gave vv. 14-18 a proper place after vv. 2-13.”  
**vs. 2-13:** 2-3, 4 | 5, 6-7 || 8-10, 11 | 12, 13 (2 cantos with 8 strophes, 20 verselines and 44 cola);  
**vs. 14-18:** 14, 15-16 || 17, 18 (2 cantos with 4 strophes, 8 verselines and 16 cola).
- Fokkelman: 2-3, 4, 5 || 6, 7-9 || 10-11b, 11c-12 || 13, 14, 15-16 || 17, 18, taking the psalm as a single composition and disregarding the caesura between vs. 13||14 by assuming a caesura between vs. 12||13 (5 stanzas with 12 strophes, 27 verselines and 58 cola).
- Labuschagne: I regard the psalm as a literary unity, in which the boundary between the two sections is still visible: 2-3, 4, 5 || 6-7 | 8-9, 10 || 11, 12, 13 || 14, 15-16, 17, 18 (4 cantos, 13 strophes, with 28 verselines and 60 cola, based on the direction of address and numerical considerations).
- For other divisions of the text, see Van der Lugt, CAS, Psalm 40, § 6 and Psalm 41, § 6.

## Logotechnical analysis

- Column **a**: words before atnach; **b**: words 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	לְמִנְצַח לְדָוִד מְזִמּוֹר: Heading, v. 1	3	3			
2	קוּחַ קִיִּיתִי יְהוָה <sup>א</sup> 1	3	3			3
	וַיֵּט אֵלַי וַיִּשְׁמַע שׁוֹעֲתִי:	4		4		4
	Total, v. 2	7	= 3	+ 4	= 0	+ 7
3	וַיַּעֲלֵנִי מִבּוֹר שָׁאוֹן 2	3	3			3
	מִטֵּיט תִּינּוֹן 3	2	2			2
	וַיִּקַּם עַל-סֵלַע רַגְלִי 3	4	4			4
	The only words spoken about God: כּוֹנֵן אֲשֶׁר־י: 2	2	2		2	
	Total, v. 3	11	= 11	+ 0	= 0	+ 11
	Strophe 1 Total, v. 2-3	18	= 14	+ 4	= 0	+ 18

4	וַיִּתֵּן בְּפִי שִׁיר חֲדָשׁ	4	4	4	4
	תִּהְיֶה לְאֱלֹהֵינוּ		2	2	2
	יִרְאוּ רַבִּים וַיִּירְאוּ	5	3	3	3
	וַיִּבְטְחוּ בַיהוָה:		2	2	2
	<b>Strophe 2</b> Total, v. 4		11	= 9 + 2	= 0 + 11
5	<b>אֲשֶׁרִי = 52</b> אֲשֶׁרִי הַגִּבּוֹר אֲשֶׁר־שָׁם	6	4	4	4
	(1+21+20+10= 52), the number <b>יְהוָה מִבְּטָחוֹ</b>		2	2	2
	of words in Canto II וְלֹא־פָנָה אֶל־רֵדְהִימִים	7	4	4	4
	וְשָׁטִי כֶזֶב:		2	2	2
	<b>Strophe 3</b> Total, v. 5		12	= 6 + 6	= 0 + 12
	Total, v. 3-5		34	= 26 + 8	= 0 + 34
	<b>Canto I</b> Total, v. 2-5		41	= 29 + 12	= 0 + 41
6	רַבּוֹת עָשִׂיתָ אֶתָּה	8	3	3	3
	<b>יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי</b>		2	2	2
	נִפְלְאוֹתֶיךָ וּמַחְשַׁבְתֶּיךָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ		3	3	3
	אֵין עָרֶךְ אֵלֶיךָ	9	3	3	3
	אֲנִידָה וְאֶדְבַּרְהָ		2	2	2
	עֲצָמוֹ מִסֵּפֶר:		2	2	2
	Total, v. 6		15	= 13 + 2	= 15 + 0
7	Meaningful centre of Cantos I-III, vs. 2-13 זָבַח וּמִנְחָה לֹא־חִפְצָתָ	10	4	4	4
	Two middle cola: <b>אֲזִינָם פְּרִיֹתָ לִי</b>		3	3	3
	(44 = 21 + 2 + 21) <b>עוֹלָה וְחִטָּאָה לֹא שְׁאֵלָתָ:</b>		4	4	4
	Total, v. 7		11	= 7 + 4	= 11 + 0
	<b>Canticle II.1</b> Strophe 4 Total, v. 6-7		26	= 20 + 6	= 26 + 0
	Total, v. 5-7		38	= 26 + 12	= 26 + 12
	Total, v. 2-7		67	= 49 + 18	= 26 + 41
8	אֲזִ אֲמַרְתִּי הִנֵּה־בָאֲתִי	11	4	4	4
	בְּמִגְלַת־סֵפֶר כָּתוּב עָלַי:		4	4	4
	Total, v. 8		8	4 + 4	8 + 0
9	לַעֲשׂוֹת־רְצוֹנְךָ אֱלֹהֵי חִפְצָתִי	12	4	4	4
	וְתוֹרַתְךָ בְּתוֹךְ מִעֵי:		3	3	3
	Total, v. 9		7	= 4 + 3	= 7 + 0
	<b>Strophe 5</b> Total, v. 8-9		15	= 8 + 7	= 15 + 0
	Total, v. 7-9		26	= 15 + 11	= 26 + 0
10	בְּשֶׁרְתִי צֶדֶק בְּקִהְלִי רַב	13	4	4	4
	Pivotal instance of YHWH הִנֵּה שְׁפָתַי לֹא אֶכְלָא		4	4	4
	Middle words of entire poem: <b>יְהוָה אֶתָּה</b> יִדְעֶתָ:		3	3	3
	(182 = 90 + 2 + 90) <b>Strophe 6</b> Total, v. 10		11	= 8 + 3	= 11 + 0
	Core of vs. 2-13: <b>Canticle II.2</b> v. 8-10		26	= 16 + 10	= 26 + 0
	(134 = 41 + 52 + 41) <b>Canto II</b> Total, v. 6-10		52	= 36 + 16	= 52 + 0

11	צְדָקָתְךָ לֹא־כִסִּיתִי בְּתוֹךְ לִבִּי	14	5	5	5
	אֲמוֹנַתְךָ וּתְשׁוּעָתְךָ אֶמְרֵתִי <sup>^</sup>		3	3	3
	לֹא־כַחֲדָתִי חִסְדְּךָ וְאַמְתָּךְ	15	4	4	4
	(2+22+6+11 = 41) לְקַהֵל רֹב:		2	2	2
	<b>Strophe 7</b>	<b>Total, v. 11</b>	<u>14 = 8 + 6 = 14 + 0</u>		
		<b>Total, v. 5-11</b>	<b>78 = 50 + 28 = 66 + 12</b>		
12	אֵתָהּ יְהוָה לֹא־תִכְלָא	16	4	4	4
	חִסְדְּךָ וְאַמְתָּךְ <sup>^</sup>		2	2	2
	רַחֲמֶיךָ מִמְּנִי	17	2	2	2
	תְּמִיד יִצְרוּנִי:		2	2	2
	<b>Strophe 8</b>	<b>Total, v. 12</b>	<u>10 = 6 + 4 = 10 + 0</u>		
13	כִּי אֶפְפוּ־עָלַי רְעוֹת	18	4	4	4
	עַד־אֵין מִסְפָּר		3	3	3
	הַשִּׁיגוּנִי עֲזוֹתִי	19	2	2	2
	וְלֹא־יִכְלָתִי לְרֹאוֹתִי <sup>^</sup>		3	3	3
	עֲצָמוֹ מִשְׁעָרוֹת רֹאשִׁי	20	3	3	3
	וְלִבִּי עֲזָבוּנִי:		2	2	2
	<b>Strophe 9</b>	<b>Total, v. 13</b>	<u>17 = 12 + 5 = 17 + 0</u>		
	<b>Canto III</b>	<b>Total, v. 11-13</b>	<u>41 = 26 + 15 = 41 + 0</u>		
		<b>Total, v. 10-13</b>	<u>52 = 34 + 18 = 52 + 0</u>		
		<b>Total, v. 2-13</b>	<b>134 = 91 + 43 = 93 + 41</b>		
<b>Boundary between two originally independent poems</b>					
14	רָצָה יְהוָה לְהַצִּילֵנִי <sup>^</sup>	21	3	3	3
	יְהוָה לְעֲזָרְתִּי חוֹשָׁה:		3	3	3
	<b>Strophe 10</b>	<b>Total, v. 14</b>	<u>6 = 3 + 3 = 6 + 0</u>		
15	יָבֹשׁוּ וַיִּחַפְּרוּ יַחַד	22	3	3	3
	מִבְּקֵשֵׁי נַפְשִׁי לְסִפּוֹתָהּ		3	3	3
	יִסְגּוּ אַחֲזֹר וַיִּכְלָמוּ <sup>^</sup>	23	3	3	3
	חֲפָצִי רְעָתִי:		2	2	2
	<b>Total, v. 15</b>		<u>11 = 9 + 2 = 11 + 0</u>		
	<b>Total, v. 14:15</b>		<b>17 = 12 + 5 = 17 + 0</b>		
16	יִשְׁמוּ עַל־עַקֵּב בְּשִׁתָּם <sup>^</sup>	24	4	4	4
	הָאֲמָרִים לִי הָאֵחָהּ הָאֵחָהּ		4	4	4
	<b>Middle words of Canto IV:</b>	<b>Total, v. 16</b>	<u>8 = 4 + 4 = 8 + 0</u>		
	48 = 23 + 2 + 23	<b>Strophe 11</b>	<b>19 = 13 + 6 = 19 + 0</b>		
		<b>Total, v. 14-16</b>	<b>25 = 16 + 9 = 25 + 0</b>		
17	יִשִּׁישׁוּ וַיִּשְׁמְחוּ בְּךָ	25	3	3	3
	כָּל־מִבְּקֵשֶׁיךָ		2	2	2
	יֹאמְרוּ תְּמִיד יִגְדַּל יְהוָה <sup>^</sup>	26	4	4	4
	אֲהַבִּי תְּשׁוּעָתְךָ:		2	2	2
	<b>Strophe 12</b>	<b>Total, v. 17</b>	<u>11 = 9 + 2 = 11 + 0</u>		

18	Coda	וְאֵנִי עֲנֵי וְאֶבִּינִן 27	3	3	3
		אֲדַנִּי יִחַשְׁבֵּ לִי	3	3	3
		עֲזַרְתִּי וּמִפְּלִטֵי אֶתְדָהּ 28	3	3	3
		אֱלֹהֵי אֵל-תִּתְאַחֵר:	3	3	3
	Strophe 13	Total, v. 18	12 = 9 + 3 = 6 + 6		
		Total, v. 17-18	23 = 18 + 5 = 17 + 6		
	Canto IV	Total, v. 14-18	48 = 34 + 14 = 42 + 6		
		Total, v. 12-18	75 = 52 + 23 = 69 + 6		
		Total, v. 2-18	182 = 125 + 57 = 135 + 47		
		With the heading, v. 1-18	185 = 128 + 57		

## Observations

- Psalm 40 consists of two distinct, originally independent components: **vs. 2-13** and **vs. 14-18**. The fact that there are exactly **17** verses and **182** (7 x 26) words, strongly suggests that the two components were not simply glued together, but carefully adapted and fused into a unity as the psalm now stands in MT. Therefore, the two sections of Psalm 40 should be differentiated, but at the same time treated as a single literary entity. For a comparable situation, see Observation 4 in my Analysis of [Psalm 7](#).

There is no agreement among scholars about the relationship between 40:14-18 and Psalm 70, which is a shorter, slightly different version of 40:14-18. Many scholars adhere to the traditional view that these verses originally belonged to Psalm 40, but there is now evidence to show that **40:14-18**, was secondarily attached to **40:2-13**. In my opinion, 40:14-18 is a reworked version of Psalm 70 by the editors of Book I, who adapted it to fit into its new context, where it forms part of a sub-group of **11** psalms. See the [Compositional Structure of the Psalter](#).

Van der Lugt has pointed out that **vs. 2-13** has a very pronounced regular framework. The 134 words of these 12 Masoretic verses (which is in his view Psalm 40 proper) divide into two equal sections (vs. 2-7 and 8-13), with 2 cantos, 4 Canticles, 10 verselines, and 67 words each. This shows that **vs. 2-13** is still a self-contained literary unity within Psalm 40 as it stands in MT after the incorporation of 40:14-18.

- The arithmetic centre of the psalm as a whole is constituted by the two words **יְהוָה אֱתָהּ**, 'YHWH, you', in **v. 10c**: **182** = 90 + 2 + 90. A larger, probably consciously designed meaningful centre, is to be found on colon level, in **vs. 10b-11b** (60 = 28 + 4 + 28):

<sup>10b-c</sup> הִנֵּה שִׁפְתֵי לֹא אֶכְלָא ^ יְהוָה אֱתָהּ יִדְעֶתָ:  
<sup>11a-b</sup> צִדְקָתְךָ לֹא-כִסִּיתִי בְּתוֹךְ לִבִּי אֲמוֹנָתְךָ וּתְשׁוּעָתְךָ אֶמְרָתִי

<sup>10b-c</sup> I do not restrain my lips // as you know, YHWH.  
<sup>11a-b</sup> Your justice I have not kept hidden in my heart //  
 your faithfulness and saving power I announced.

- The first section, **vs. 2-13** (Cantos I-III), has its own meaningful centre, which is likewise to be found on colon level: the two pivotal cola in **vs. 7b-c** (44 = 21 + 2 + 21) containing the crucial statement that God does not demand offerings but obedience:

אָזְנוֹם כְּרִיתִי לִי עוֹלָה וְחֹטְאָה לֹא שִׁאֲלָתָּ  
 Open ears have you given me // burnt offering and sin offering you have not required.

It is worth noting that the meaningful centre is made up of **7** words with **26** letters, exactly as the meaningful centre of Psalm 39 - see Observation 1 in my Analysis of [Psalm 39](#).

The second section, **vs. 14-18** (Canto IV), also has a meaningful centre of its own, in this case, on word level (48 = 23 + 2 + 23): the two words **הָאֵחַ הָאֵחַ**, 'Aha, Aha!', in **v. 16b**.

4. Viewed from a numerical point of view, the psalm has the following striking structure:

		Verses	Verselines	Cola	Words
Canto I	vs. 2-5	4	7	14	41
Canto II.1	vs. 6-7	2	3	9	26
Canto II.2	vs. 8-10	3	3	7	26
Canto III	vs. 11-13	3	7	14	41
Total	vs. 2-13	12	20	44	134
Canto IV	vs. 14-18	5	8	16	48
Total	vs. 2-18	17	28	60	182

**Canto I** stands out because it contains the only words in Cantos I-III spoken *about God*. **Canto III** and **Canto I** resemble each other closely, being both made up of **7** verselines, **14** cola, and **41** words. The formal resemblance between **Canticle II.1** and **II.2** lies in their having **3** verselines and **26** words. **Canto IV**, vs. 14-18, stands out as the section integrated into the original psalm, vs. 2-13. The concluding strophe, v. 18, is evidently a coda, significantly introduced by words suddenly spoken *about God*, as in Canto I.

5. The number **41**, the number of words in Canto I and Canto III, represents the numerical value of two keywords in v. 3 eloquently expressing the crisis in which the speaker finds himself and from which he hopes to be rescued: **מִבּוֹר**, 'from the pit' ( $13+2+6+20 = 41$ ), and **מִמָּיִט**, 'from the mud' ( $13+9+10+9 = 41$ ). **41** also happens to be the numerical value of **בְּתוֹךְ**, 'in the midst of', in v. 11a ( $2+22+6+11 = 41$ ), but this may be coincidence.

However, I believe that the numerical value of **אֲשֶׁרִי**, 'happy' (**52**) in v. 5 was consciously designed to determine the number of words in **Canto II**. The word apparently precludes the initial word of Psalm 41 – see Observation 2 in my Analysis of [Psalm 41](#).

6. The divine name numbers feature in the entire poem to weave both sections together:

vs. 3-5	<b>34</b>	(2 x <b>17</b> ) words, with <b>26</b> before atnach,
vs. 6-7	<b>26</b>	words in total
vs. 5-7	<b>26</b>	words before atnach
vs. 8-10	<b>26</b>	words in total
vs. 5-11	<b>78</b>	(3 x <b>26</b> ) words in total
v. 13	<b>17</b>	words in total
vs. 11-13	<b>26</b>	words before atnach
vs. 10-13	<b>52</b>	(2 x <b>26</b> ) words in total, with <b>34</b> before atnach
vs. 14-15	<b>17</b>	words in total
vs. 14-18	<b>34</b>	(2 x <b>17</b> ) words before atnach
vs. 12-18	<b>52</b>	(2 x <b>26</b> ) words before atnach, and last but not least
vs. 2-18	<b>182</b>	(7 x <b>26</b> ) words in total.

7. The name **יהוה** occurs no less than 9 times, with the middle occurrence exactly in v. 10c, where it highlights the meaningful centre of the psalm.

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