

Psalm 113— Logotechnical Analysis

Guidelines

- Please read the [General Introduction](#) as well as the Introduction to [Book I](#) and [Book V](#).
- For common features found in the numerical analysis charts, see the [Key to the charts](#).

Specific features of Psalm 113

- As Psalms 111 and 112, this psalm divides into three cantos (vs. 1-3, 4-6 and 7-9), of which the middle canto is enveloped by exactly **39** words. Consult the “Specific features” of [Psalm 111](#). In addition, Psalm 113 is thematically related to Psalm 112 – see below Observation 3.
- Moreover, in MT, all three psalms are provided with *halleluyah* at the beginning of the text. I understand these features as clear indications that Psalm 113 inseparably belongs to the two preceding sister poems. This may explain the remarkable *hallelu-yah* at the end of Psalm 113. In my opinion, its original place was at the beginning of Psalm 114 (as in LXX), but the Masoretes relocated it to the end of Psalm 113, marking it as the tailpiece of a distinct group of *seven* psalms (107-113).
- It cannot be mere coincidence that four successive psalms have a similar basic 3-canto structure, with the middle canto being surrounded by a significant number of words – see the “Specific features” of Psalm 114. For the relationship between the *seven* psalms (107-113) and the following *four* (114-117), which together constitute a distinct group of *eleven* psalms in the well-known pattern **11** = 7 + 4, see the Introduction to [Book V](#).
- The **17**-word central canto deals with the important idea of YHWH’s incomparability.

Strophic structure - Canto/Stanza boundary: ||

- Van der Lugt: 1-3, 4-6, 7-9 (3 strophes with 9 verselines and 18 cola).
- Fokkelman: 1-2, 3-4 || 5-6, 7-9 (4 strophes with 9 verselines and 18 cola).
- Labuschagne: 1, 2-3 || 4-6 || 7-8, 9 (3 cantos, 5 strophes with 9 verselines and 18 cola).

Logotechnical analysis

- Columns **a** and **b** show the number of words before and after the atnach.
- Column **c**: call to praise YHWH for rescuing the poor; **d**: and for being incomparable.
- The numbering of the verselines is shown in **brown**.

| | | Total | a | b | c | d |
|---|---|-------|------|------|------|-----|
| 1 | תִּלְלוּ יְהוָה | 2 | = 2 | + 0 | | |
| | תִּלְלוּ עִבְדֵי יְהוָה ¹ | 3 | 3 | | 3 | |
| | תִּלְלוּ אֶת־שֵׁם יְהוָה: | 4 | | 4 | 4 | |
| | Strophe 1 Total, v. 1 | 7 | = 3 | + 4 | = 7 | + 0 |
| 2 | יְהִי שֵׁם יְהוָה מְבֹרָךְ ² | 4 | 4 | | 4 | |
| | מִעֲתָה וְעַד־עוֹלָם: | 3 | | 3 | 3 | |
| | Total, v. 2 | 7 | = 4 | + 3 | = 7 | + 0 |
| 3 | מִמְזִרְח־שָׁמֶשׁ עַד־מְבוֹאוֹ ³ | 4 | 4 | | 4 | |
| | מִהַלְלֵי שֵׁם יְהוָה: | 3 | | 3 | 3 | |
| | Total, v. 3 | 7 | = 4 | + 3 | = 7 | + 0 |
| | Strophe 2 Total, v. 2-3 | 14 | = 8 | + 6 | = 14 | + 0 |
| | Canto I Total, v. 1-3 | 21 | = 11 | + 10 | = 21 | + 0 |

| | |
|---|--|
| <p>4 רם על-כל-גוים יהודה[^] 4 Middle words: 56=27+<u>2</u>+27 : על השמים כבודו כבודו = 29 (11+2+6+4+6) Total, v. 4 Total, v. 1-4</p> | <p>5 5 5 3 3 3 8 = 5 + 3 = 0 + 8 29 = 16 + 13 = 21 + 8 3 3 3 2 2 2 5 = 3 + 2 = 0 + 5 13 = 8 + 5 = 0 + 13 34 = 19 + 15 = 21 + 13 2 2 2 2 2 2 4 = 2 + 2 = 0 + 4 17 = 10 + 7 = 0 + 17 38 = 21 + 17 = 21 + 17</p> |
| <p>5 Middle verselines: מי ביהודה אלהינו[^] 5 9 = 4 + 1 + 4 המנביהי לשבת: Middle two cola: 18 = 8 + 2 + 8 Total, v. 5 Total, v. 4-5 שם = 34 (21 + 13) Total, v. 1-5</p> | <p>5 5 5 3 3 3 2 2 2 5 = 3 + 2 = 0 + 5 13 = 8 + 5 = 0 + 13 34 = 19 + 15 = 21 + 13 2 2 2 2 2 2 4 = 2 + 2 = 0 + 4 17 = 10 + 7 = 0 + 17 38 = 21 + 17 = 21 + 17</p> |
| <p>6 המשפילי לראות[^] 6 בשמים ובארץ: Total, v. 6 The Core Canto II Strophe 3 Total, v. 4-6 Total, v. 1-6</p> | <p>6 6 6 2 2 2 2 2 2 4 = 2 + 2 = 0 + 4 17 = 10 + 7 = 0 + 17 38 = 21 + 17 = 21 + 17</p> |
| <p>7 מקימי מעפר דל[^] 7 מאשפת ירים אביון: Total, v. 7 Total, v. 4-7</p> | <p>7 7 7 3 3 3 3 3 3 6 = 3 + 3 = 6 + 0 23 = 13 + 10 = 6 + 17 3 3 3 3 3 3 6 = 3 + 3 = 6 + 0 12 = 6 + 6 = 12 + 0</p> |
| <p>8 להושיבי עם נדיבים[^] 8 עם נדיבי עמו: Total, v. 8 Strophe 4 Total, v. 7-8</p> | <p>8 8 8 3 3 3 3 3 3 6 = 3 + 3 = 6 + 0 12 = 6 + 6 = 12 + 0</p> |
| <p>9* מושיבי עקרת הבית 9 אם הבנים שמחה הללויה: Strophe 5 Total, v. 9 Canto III Total, v. 7-9 Total, v. 5-9 Total, v. 1-9 Including הללויה in v. 1, Total, v. 1-9 Including הללויה in v. 9, Total, v. 1-9</p> | <p>9 9 9 3 3 3 3 3 3 6 = 6/3 + 0/3 = 6 + 0 18 = 12/9 + 6/9 = 18 + 0 27 = 17/14 + 10/13 = 18 + 9 56 = 33/30 + 23/26 = 39 + 17 58 = 35/32 + 23/26 60 = 35/32 + 25/28</p> |

* This is the only verse in the psalm lacking an *atnach* after the first colon. Had there been an *atnach*, the compositional formula would become: 56 = 30 + 26, and including the first *hallelu-yah*, 58 = 32 + 23, the *kebod*-YHWH formula. Despite this, I leave the text in Codex L as it stands, because there is no support from other text editions for restoring the missing *atnach*. See the [General Introduction](#), p. 2, for my stance in this respect.

Observations

1. The two middle words happen to be השמים כבודו, 'the heavens his glory', in v. 4b (56 = 27 + 2 + 27), but the meaningful centre is to be found in terms of the poetic structure: the middle verseline (9 = 4 + 1 + 4) and middle cola (18 = 8 + 2 + 8) v. 5:

מי ביהודה אלהינו[^] המנביהי לשבת:

Who is like YHWH our God // who is seated on high?

2. What is significant about the 2-word arithmetic centre is the fact that כבודו, 'his glory', is an important keyword. Its numerical value, 29, may determine the number of words in vs. 1-4, before the meaningful centre. The glory of God signifying his presence is strongly underlined by the unmistakable emphasis on his *name*, which appears no less than *three* times (vs. 1b, 2a and 3b). Incidentally, the numerical value of שם, 'name', is 34 (21+13), the number of words in vs. 1-5.

3. The basic structure of Psalm 113 is similar to that of 111 and 112: it divides into three cantos, of which the central canto (vs. 4-6) is enveloped by a **39**-word framework:

| | | | |
|--------------------|--|----|-------------|
| Canto I, vs. 1-3 | Call to praise the name of YHWH | 21 | } 39 |
| Canto II, vs. 4-6 | His high position and incomparability | 17 | |
| Canto III, vs. 7-9 | The proof: he rescues the poor and needy | 18 | |

The crucial characteristic rendering YHWH incomparable, his rescuing of the poor and needy, is reminiscent of the essential characteristic of the God-fearing in Psalm 112: his disposition to share his wealth with the poor and needy. This obvious analogy shows that there is not only a formal relationship between Psalms 112 and 113, but also also a relationship in terms of content.

As I have explained in the [General Introduction](#), under “Special patterns”, the number **39** derives its significance from the numerical value of *YHWH echad*: **26 + 13 = 39**. I encountered this formula many times, especially in contexts dealing with YHWH’s ‘one-ness’, which is equivalent to his uniqueness and incomparability.*

With hindsight, we may safely conclude that the number **39** in the frameworks of Psalms 111 and 112 numerically precludes the dominant theme of Psalm 113, the incomparability and uniqueness of YHWH. See Observation 2 in my Analysis of [Psalm 111](#) and Observation 3 in that of [Psalm 112](#).

Significantly enough, though not surprisingly, the meaningful core of Psalm 113 is made up of exactly **17** words. Compare the **26**-word framework of Psalm 114 surrounding its **26**-word core. I understand this as evidence showing that Psalm 114 is the fourth sister psalm in a row.

4. In addition to the occurrence of the divine name number **17** in the central canto, it is also to be found in the **34** (2 x **17**) words of vs. 1-5, as well as in the **17** words after atnach in vs. 1-6, and the **17** words before atnach in vs. 5-9.
5. The 7 Hebrew words of v. 3, "From the rising of the sun unto the setting thereof, the name of YHWH is praised," are to be found in many synagogues written on an ornamental picture hung in front of the reading-desk near the Ark. In many Jewish homes a Mizrach (‘east’) plaque hangs on the eastern wall indicating the East (in the direction of Jerusalem). The **7** words may be interpreted as symbolizing the seven lamps of the menorah representing the presence of YHWH. Note also the **7** words in vs. 1 and 2 and the total number of words, **56**, which is a multiple of **7**.

See “Mizrach” in [JewishEncyclopedia.com](#). The plaque is often combined with the Shivviti plaque containing Ps. 16:8a – see Observation 7 in my Analysis of [Psalm 16](#).

6. Seeing the explicit use of the word *kbwd*, ‘glory’, in v. 4b, the occurrence of its numerical value, **23** (11 + 2 + 6 + 4) in vs. 4-7, may be a matter of conscious design. This also applies to the **23** words after atnach in the compositional formula of v. 1-9.
7. The name יהוה occurs 6 times; together with יה in the *hallelu-yah* at the beginning, there are **7** occurrences of the divine name. The word אֱלֹהִים, ‘God’, appears only in v. 5a, exactly in the meaningful centre: אֱלֹהֵינוּ, ‘our God’, obviously to emphasize the fact that the incomparable God is ‘our God’!

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* For the notion of YHWH’s incomparability, see my dissertation *The Incomparability of Yahweh in the Old Testament*, (Pretoria Oriental Series 5), E.J. Brill, Leiden 1966. For the *YHWH echad* formula, consult my book *Numerical Secrets of the Bible*, pp. 128f.