

Psalm 122— 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 122

- As in Psalm 118, the compositional structure of the psalm is determined by the direction of address, in this case, words spoken to and about Jerusalem.
- A feature the psalm shares with Psalm 121 is the use of the numerical value of a keyword to give structure to the text. The two cantos constituting the main body of the poem, Canto II (vs. 3-5) and Canto III (vs. 6-9), are both made up of **24** words, the numerical value of the name David, which is written here in the unusual *scriptio plena* spelling *dwyd* (4 + 6 + 10 + 4 = 24), the only instance in the Psalter!

Strophic structure - Canto/Stanza boundary: ||

- Van der Lugt: 1-2 || 3-4b, 4c-5 || 6-7, 8-9 (3 cantos, 5 strophes, 10 verselines, 20 cola).
- Fokkelman and Labuschagne: similarly.

Logotechnical analysis

- Columns **a** and **b** show the number of words before and after the atnach.
- Column **c**: words spoken about Jerusalem; **d**: words addressed to Jerusalem.
- The numbering of the verselines is shown in **brown**.

		Total	a	b	c	d
1 *	שִׁיר הַמַּעֲלוֹת לְדָוִד	3 = 3 + 0				
	שָׁמַחְתִּי בְּאִמְרֵי לַיהוָה	1 3	3		3	
	בֵּית יְהוָה גִּלְדִּי:	3		3	3	
	Total, v. 1	6 = 3 + 3			6	0
2	עֲמֻדוֹת תְּיוֹן רַגְלֵינִי	2 3	3			3
	בְּשַׁעְרֵי יְרוּשָׁלַם:	2		2		2
	Total, v. 2	5 = 3 + 2			0	5
	Canto I Strophe 1 Total, v. 1-2	11 = 6 + 5			6	5
3	יְרוּשָׁלַם הַבְּנוּיָה	3 2	2		2	
	כְּעִיר שֶׁחִבְּרָהּ לָהּ יַחְדָּו:	4		4	4	
	Total, v. 3	6 = 2 + 4			6	0
	Total, v. 1-3	17 = 8 + 9			12	5
4a	שָׁשָׂם עָלָי שְׁבָטִים	4 3	3		3	
4b	שְׁבָטֵי־יָהּ	2	2		2	
	Strophe 2 Total, v. 3-4b	11 = 7 + 4			11	0
4c	עֲדוֹת לְיִשְׂרָאֵל	5 2	2		2	
	לְהַדוֹת לְשֵׁם יְהוָה:	3		3	3	
	(16 + 4 + 6 + 22 = 48) עֲדוֹת = 48					
	דָּוִד = 24 (4 + 6 + 10 + 4 = 24) Total, v. 4cd	5 = 2 + 3			5	0
5	כִּי שָׁמָּה יָשְׁבוּ כְּסָאוֹת לְמִשְׁפָּט	6 5	5		5	
	כְּסָאוֹת לְבֵית דָּוִד:	3		3	3	
	Middle words: 27 + 5 + 27					
	Middle verselines, vs.4c-5: 4 + 2 + 4	8 = 5 + 3			8	0
	Middle strophe: Strophe 3 Total, v. 4c-5	13 = 7 + 6			13	0
	Canto II Total, v. 3-5	24 = 14 + 10			24	0

6	שָׁלוֹם ³ יְרוּשָׁלַם ^	7	3	3	3	
	יְשָׁלוּ אֶת־בְּיָדָּ:		<u>2</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>2</u>	
	Total, v. 6		5	= 3 + 2	= 3 + 2	
7	Middle instance of 'peace' בְּחִילָדָּ ^	8	3	3	3	
	יְהִי בְּאַרְמְנוֹתֶיךָ : שְׁלוֹהַּ בְּאַרְמְנוֹתֶיךָ :		<u>2</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>2</u>	
	in the Songs of Ascents		5	= 3 + 2	= 0 + 5	
	See Observation 7		10	= 6 + 4	= 3 + 7	
	Strophe 4 Total, v. 6-7		34	= 20 + 14	= 27 + 7	
	Total, v. 3-7					
8	לְמַעַן אֶחֱי וְרַעִי ^	9	3	3	3	
	אֲדַבְּרָה־נָּא בְּיָדָּ : שְׁלוֹם ⁵ בְּיָדָּ :		<u>4</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>4</u>	
	Total, v. 8		7	= 3 + 4	= 0 + 7	
9	לְמַעַן בֵּית־יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ ^	10	4	4	4	
	אֲבַקֶּשֶׁה טוֹב לְךָ :		<u>3</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>3</u>	
	Total, v. 9		7	= 4 + 3	= 0 + 7	
	Strophe 5 Total, v. 8-9		14	= 7 + 7	= 0 + 14	
	Canto III Total, v. 6-9		24	= 13 + 11	= 3 + 21	
	Total, v. 3-9		48	= 27 + 21	= 27 + 21	
	Total, v. 1-9		59	= 33 + 26	= 33 + 26	
	Including the heading, v. 1-9		62	= 36 + 26		

* לְדָוִד, 'for David', in the heading, does not appear in LXX and some Hebrew manuscripts.

Observations

- In terms of the 59 words, the logotechnical centre is constituted by the 5 words in v. 5a (59 = 27 + 5 + 27), but the meaningful centre is vs. 4c-5, the middle strophe, coinciding with the two middle verselines and the four middle cola:

עֲדוֹת לְיִשְׂרָאֵל ^ לְהוֹדוֹת לְשֵׁם יְהוָה :^{4c-d}
כִּי שָׁמָּה יֹשְׁבוּ כְּסֵאוֹת לְמִשְׁפַּט ^ כְּסֵאוֹת לְבֵית דָּוִד :⁵

4c-d It is a decree for Israel // to give thanks to the name of YHWH

5 For there they sat on thrones of judgement // on thrones of the house of David.

These two verselines form a coherent thought unit and is the best candidate for 'meaningful centre'.

- The compositional structure of the psalm on canto level is fundamentally determined by the direction of address. This means that there are strong caesurae between vs. 2 || 3 and 5 || 6, which we cannot ignore in search of the poem's framework. In my judgement, they render other presumed breaks in the text invalid.

Canto I, vs. 1-2 in broad outline, words addressed to Jerusalem

Canto II, vs. 3-5 words spoken about Jerusalem

Canto III, vs. 6-9 in broad outline, words addressed to Jerusalem.

In terms of words, the text divides as follows:

Canto I, vs. 1-2 11 words

Canto II, vs. 3-5 24 words

Canto III, vs. 6-9 24 words.

Since Canto I is an introduction, Cantos II and III constitute the main body of the psalm, dealing with the city of Jerusalem and its peace. Significantly, Cantos II and III are both made up of 24 words, which is, in my view, not a matter of coincidence: the two instances of 24 (2 x 12) symbolically refer to the 12 tribes. They are explicitly mentioned twice (in v. 4a and 4b). Compare Observation 3 in my Analysis of [Psalm 129](#).

At the same time, **24** represents the numerical value of the name David, written here (in Codex L) in the so-called *scriptio plena* as דָּוִיד (dwyd: 4 + 6 + 10 + 4 = **24**). Everywhere else in the Psalter we find the normal spelling דָּוִד (dwd: 4 + 6 + 4 = 14).

3. Incidentally, the total number of words in the two cantos, **48**, represents the numerical value of עֲדוּת, 'decree', the first word in the meaningful centre (16 + 4 + 6 + 22 = **48**). It is likely that the unusual spelling of the name David, as well as the choice for the word עֲדוּת, were consciously designed as logotechnical devices. Compare the use of the number 54, the numerical value of שָׁמַר, 'guard, keep', in [Psalm 121](#)!
4. The word-count of the specific passages in which Jerusalem is addressed, vs. 2, and 6b-9, shows the surprising result registered in Columns c and d: 33 words are spoken about Jerusalem and **26** are used to address the city.
The formula 59 = 33 + **26** corresponds exactly with the overall compositional formula: 59 = 33a + **26b**. For a similar use of the direction of address to achieve a desired formula, see Observation 6 in my Analysis of [Psalm 118](#).
5. Another significant feature of the psalm is the use of בֵּית־יְהוָה, 'the house of YHWH', in vs. 1 and 9 as a device for inclusion. At the same time it draws attention to בֵּית דָּוִד, 'the house of David', in the meaningful centre, v. 5.
6. In addition to the two occurrences of the divine name number **26** already mentioned, the number **17** is to be found in the **17** words of vs. 1-3 and the **34** (2 x **17**) of vs. 3-7. As in Psalms 120 and 121, the low frequency of divine name numbers is due to the use of another, dominant, structuring number: here, twice the number **12**.
See Observation 4 in each of my Analyses of Psalms [120](#) and [121](#).
7. Special mention deserves the obvious role of **7**, the number of fullness (marked **bold**). Significantly enough, the word שָׁלוֹם, 'peace', occurs exactly **7** times in the Songs of Ascents (120:6, **7**; 122: 6, **7**, 8; 125:5 and 128:5), with **122:7** at the centre. The **peace of Jerusalem** contrasts sharply with the foreign nations' **hatred against Zion**, expressed by the **7** instances of the name Zion (125:1, 126:1, 128:5, **129:5**, 132:13, 133:3, 134:3), with **129:5** at the centre! See Observation 4 in my Analysis of [Psalm 129](#).
8. The name יְהוָה occurs 3x (vs. 1b, 4b and 9a) and יְה, YH, 1x (v. 4b). The word אֱלֹהֵינוּ, 'our God', is to be found only in v. 9a.

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