

# Psalm 125— 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 125

- The general theme of the preceding psalms, God's protection and salvation in times of distress, is reiterated and elaborated here. That we have to do with psalms stemming from the same hand, is strongly suggested by the many features they share.
- As in Psalms 121-123, the total number of words (**47**) is determined by the numerical value of a keyword, in this case, the word **הַבְּטָחִים**, 'those who trust'.
- The psalm is rounded off by a coda, a feature it shares with Psalms 124 and especially with Psalm 128.
- The idea that YHWH surrounds his people as the mountains surround Jerusalem, is symbolically buttressed by the 4 occurrences of the name YHWH surrounding the meaningful centre (v. 3).

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

- Van der Lugt: 1-2, 3, 4-5 (3 strophes, 6 verselines with 14 cola, taking v. 1 as a bicolon).
- Fokkelman: similarly, except that he regards v. 5c as a separate verseline (7 verselines).
- Labuschagne: 1-2, 3 || 4-5 (2 cantos with 3 strophes, 6 verselines and 15 cola, taking v. 1 as a tricolon).

## Logotechnical analysis

- Columns **a** and **b** show the number of words before and after the atnach.
- Column **c**: words spoken about God; **d**: words addressed to God.

		Total	a	b	c	d
1	שִׁיר הַמַּעֲלוֹת	2 = 2 + 0				
	הַבְּטָחִים = 47      הַבְּטָחִים בֵּיתָהּ	2	2		2	
	כָּהֲרָ-צִיּוֹן <sup>2</sup> לֹא-יִמוּט      See Observation 5	4		4	4	
	לְעוֹלָם יֵשֵׁב:	2		2	2	
	Total, v. 1	8 = 2 + 6			8 + 0	
2	יְרוּשָׁלַם הָרִים סָבִיב לָהּ	4	4		4	
	וַיִּתְּנָה סָבִיב לְעִמּוֹן	3	3		3	
	מִעֵתָהּ וְעַד-עוֹלָם:	3		3	3	
	Total, v. 2	10 = 7 + 3			10 + 0	
	Strophe 1      Total, v. 1-2	18 = 9 + 9			18 + 0	
3	כִּי לֹא יִנוּחַ שֹׁכֵב הַרְשָׁע	5	5		5	
	עַל גּוֹרֵל הַצְּדִיקִים      Middle word: 23 + 1 + 23	3	3		3	
	לְמַעַן לֹא-יִשְׁלַחוּ הַצְּדִיקִים	4	4		4	
	בְּעוֹלָתָהּ יִרְיָהֶם:	2	2		2	
	Strophe 2      Total, v. 3	14 = 14 + 0			14 + 0	
	Canto I      Total, v. 1-3	32 = 23 + 9			32 + 0	

4	הַיְשִׁיבָה יְהוָה לְטוֹבִים וְלִישָׂרִים בְּלִבּוֹתָם: Total, v. 4	3	3	3
		2	2	2
5	וְהַמְטִים עַקְלָלוֹתָם יּוֹלִיכִם יְהוָה אֶת־פְּעָלֵי הָאָוֶן <sup>^</sup> v. 5c Coda : עַל־יִשְׂרָאֵל <sup>6</sup> <span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">שָׁלוֹם<sup>6</sup></span> See Observation 5	5	5	5
	Total, v. 5	3	3	3
	Total, v. 1-5	10	7 + 3	10 + 0
	With the heading, v. 1-5	47	33 + 14	42 + 5
		49	35 + 14	

## Observations

1. The middle word, על, 'upon' (23 + 1 + 23), which is situated within the middle colon (7 + 1 + 7), does not deserve the status of consciously designed meaningful centre. The middle strophe, v. 3 as a whole, would be a better candidate:

כִּי לֹא יָנוּחַ שִׁבְט הַרְשָׁע [עַל] גּוֹרֵל הַצַּדִּיקִים  
לְמַעַן לֹא־יִשְׁלַחוּ הַצַּדִּיקִים בְּעִנְלָתָהּ יָדֵיהֶם:

Surely, the sceptre of wickedness shall not rest upon the allotment of the righteous;  
So that the righteous will not extend their hands to wrongdoing.

The meaningful centre is made up of 14 (2 x 7) words. Compare the 14 words in total after atnach and the 42 (6 x 7) words spoken about God (Column c).

2. The beginning of the Canto II, vs. 4-5, is marked by the sudden change from 3<sup>rd</sup> to 2<sup>nd</sup> person form: the 5 words in v. 4 are directly addressed to YHWH. Logotechnically, this causes the formula 47 = 42c + 5d, with 42 (6 x 7) words spoken about God and 5 words addressed to him. It recalls Psalm 120, where we find the formula 49 = 42c + 7d, and Psalm 126, with the formula 48 = 42c + 6d.
3. The numerical value of the very first word of the psalm, which may certainly be considered a keyword, הַבֹּטְטִים, 'those who trust' (5 + 2 + 9 + 8 + 10 + 13 = 47), has apparently determined the total number of words. Compare Psalms 121-123 and 126.
4. The last colon, v. 5c, appears to be a typical coda, that stands out within the last strophe. Compare 128:6b, where this coda reverberates.\*
5. For the significance of the 7 occurrences of the name Zion and the word שָׁלוֹם, 'peace', in the Songs of Ascents, see Observation 7 in my Analysis of Psalm 122.
6. As in Psalms 120-123, the author may not have endeavoured to weave divine name numbers into the text. The appearance of the *kabod* numbers 32 and 23 in vs. 1-3 may have been deliberately designed to symbolize YHWH's presence.
7. The name יהוה occurs 4x (vs. 1a, 2b, 4a and 5b), but significantly, not in the meaningful centre. This may be interpreted as consciously intended to let the divine name surround the meaningful centre in the same fashion as the mountains surround Jerusalem and YHWH surrounds his people.

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\* Van der Lugt remarks: "the colon is a relatively independent blessing at the end of the poem, but belongs to the foregoing line; cf. Ps. 128:6b and Ex. 15:18." In my judgement, Fokkelman goes too far in considering the last colon as a separate verseline.