

Psalm 132— 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 132

- This psalm, by far the longest of the Songs of Ascents, is a masterpiece of numerical artistry. Its compositional structure is fundamentally determined by the four embedded speeches: one by David, one by the people of Israel, and two by Yahweh.
- It consists of two cantos, divided on the basis of ‘human speeches’ made up of **51** (3 x 17) words (Canto I), and ‘divine speeches’ made up of **52** (2 x 26) words (Canto II).
- The 3-word meaningful centre is situated at the beginning of the divine speeches, [v. 11a](#), “YHWH has sworn an oath to David” (129 = 63 + 3 + 63). It is skillfully flanked by 63 words; this number represents the numerical value of מְשִׁיחָךְ, ‘your anointed’ (13 + 21 + 10 + 8 + 11 = 63), and is a keyword of paramount importance. It also happens to be the 63rd and last word in Canto I. The theme ‘oil’, associated with anointing, is significantly reiterated in [Psalm 133](#) which witnesses the close connection between the two psalms.
- Being a ‘messianic’ poem, Psalm 132 shares many features with Psalm 89 in terms of form and content, which suggests either common authorship or mutual dependence.

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

- Van der Lugt: 1-2, 3-5 | 6-7, 8-10 || 11, 12 | 13-14, 15-16, 17-18 (2 cantos, 4 canticles, 9 strophes, 20 verselines with 40 cola).
- Fokkelman: 1-2, 3-5 || 6-7, 8-9 || 10-11b, 11c-12 || 13-14, 15-16, 17-18 (4 stanzas, 9 strophes, 20 verselines with 40 cola).
- Labuschagne: as Van der Lugt.

Logotechnical analysis

- Columns **a** and **b** show the number of words before and after the atnach.
- Column **c**: words in the introductions; **d**: words in the four speeches.
- **David’s Speech** (vs. 1-2).
- **The People’s Speech** (vs. 6-10).
- **Two Speeches by YHWH** (vs. 11c-12 and vs. 14-18).
- The numbering of the verselines is shown in **brown**.

		Total	a	b	c	d
1	שִׁיר הַמַּעֲלוֹת Heading	2	= 2	+ 0		
	זְכוֹר־יְהוָה לְדָוִד 1	3	3		3	
	אֶת כָּל־עֲנוֹתָיו:	3		3	3	
	Total, v. 1	6	= 3	+ 3	= 6	+ 0
2	אֲשֶׁר נִשְׁבַּע לַיהוָה 2	3	3		3	
	נִדְרָ לְאַבִּיר יַעֲקֹב:	3		3	3	
	Total, v. 2	6	= 3	+ 3	= 6	+ 0
	Strophe 1 Total, v. 1-2	12	= 6	+ 6	= 12	+ 0

3	David's Speech	אִם-אָבֹא בְּאֶהֱל בֵּיתִי [^]	3	4	4		4
	vs. 3-5 (22 words)	אִם-אֶעֱלֶה עַל-עֶרְשׁ יִצְוְעִי :		5		5	5
		Total, v. 3		9	= 4 + 5	= 0 + 9	
4		אִם-אֶתֵּן שְׁנַת לְעֵינָי [^]	4	4	4		4
		לְעַפְעָפִי הַנּוֹמָה :		2		2	2
		Total, v. 4		6	= 4 + 2	= 0 + 6	
5		עַד-אֲמַצָּא מְקוֹם לַיהוָה [^]	5	4	4		4
		מִשְׁכַּנּוֹת לְאַבִּיר יַעֲקֹב :		3		3	3
		Total, v. 5		7	= 4 + 3	= 0 + 7	
	Strophe 2	Total, v. 3-5		22	= 12 + 10	= 0 + 22	
	Canticle I.1	Total, v. 1-5		34	= 18 + 16	= 12 + 22	
6		הִנֵּה שְׁמַעְנוּהָ בְּאֶפְרָתָה [^]	6	3	3		3
	Vs. 6-10 People's Speech (29 words)	מִצְאֵנוּהָ בְּשָׂרֵי-יָעַר :		3		3	3
		Total, v. 6		6	= 3 + 3	= 0 + 6	
		Total, v. 2-6		34	= 18 + 16	= 6 + 28	
7		נִבְוָאָה לְמִשְׁכַּנּוֹתָיו [^]	7	2	2		2
		נִשְׁתַּחֲוֶה לְהַרְם רְגְלָיו :		3		3	3
		Total, v. 7		5	= 2 + 3	= 0 + 5	
	Strophe 3	Total, v. 6-7		11	= 5 + 6	= 0 + 11	
8		קוֹמָה יְהוָה לְמִנוּחַתְּךָ [^]	8	3	3		3
		אֶתָּה וְאַרְוֵן עֲנֶךָ :		3		3	3
		Total, v. 8		6	= 3 + 3	= 0 + 6	
		Total, v. 6-8		17	= 8 + 9	= 0 + 17	
		Total, v. 1-8		51	= 26 + 25	= 12 + 39	
9		כַּהֲנִיף וּלְבָשׁוּ-צַדִּיקָא [^]	9	3	3		3
		וַחֲסִידֶיךָ יְרַגְּנוּ :		2		2	2
		Total, v. 9		5	= 3 + 2	= 0 + 5	
10		בַּעֲבוּר דָּוִד עֲבַדְךָ [^]	10	3	3		3
	מְשִׁיחָךָ = 63	אֶל-תֵּשֵׁב פָּנָי מְשִׁיחָךָ :		4		4	4
		Total, v. 10		7	= 3 + 4	= 0 + 7	
	Strophe 4	Total, v. 8-10		18	= 9 + 9	= 0 + 18	
	Canticle I.2	Total, v. 6-10		29	= 14 + 15	= 0 + 29	
	Canto I	Total, v. 1-10		63	= 32 + 31	= 12 + 51	
11	Middle words: 63 + 3 + 63	נִשְׁבַּע יְהוָה לְדָוִד	11	3	3		3
	Meaningful centre	אָמַת לֹא-יָשׁוּב מִמֶּנָּה		4	4		4
	YHWH's First Speech (11c-12)	מִפְּרִי בְּמִנְחָה [^]	12	2	2		2
	(19 words)	אֲשִׁית לְכֶסֶף-לָךְ :		3		3	3
	Middle strophe	Strophe 5	Total, v. 11	12	= 9 + 3	= 7 + 5	
12		אִם-יִשְׁמְרוּ בְּנֵיךָ בְּרִיתִי	13	4	4		4
		וְעַדְתִּי זֹו אֶלְמָדָם		3	3		3
		גַּם-בְּנֵיהֶם עַד־עַד [^]	14	4	4		4
		יִשְׁבוּ לְכֶסֶף-לָךְ :		3		3	3
	Strophe 6	Total, v. 12		14	= 11 + 3	= 0 + 14	
	Canticle II.1	Total, v. 11-12		26	= 20 + 6	= 7 + 19	

13	כִּי־בָחַר יְהוָה בְּצִיּוֹן ⁵	15	4	4	4
	אָנֹה לְמוֹשָׁב לֹו: See below Observation 4		3	3	3
	Total, v. 13		7	= 4 + 3	= 7 + 0
	Total, v. 11-13		33	= 24 + 9	= 14 + 19
	Total, v. 8-13		51	= 33 + 18	= 14 + 37
14	זֹאת־מְנוּחָתִי עַד־עַד ⁵	16	4	4	4
	YHWH's second Speech : פֶּה־אֲשַׁב כִּי אֹתִיהָ:		4	4	4
	vs. 14-18 (33 words)		8	= 4 + 4	= 0 + 8
	Total, v. 14		15	= 8 + 7	= 7 + 8
	Strophe 7 Total, v. 13-14				
15	The 6th and 7th instance	17	3	3	3
of the root	צִדְדָה בָּרַךְ אֲבָרְךָ ⁵		3	3	3
of the root	אֲבִיּוֹנִיָּה אֲשַׁבֵּיעַ לָחֶם:		6	= 3 + 3	= 0 + 6
in a series of 10 in this corpus	Total, v. 15		6	= 3 + 3	= 0 + 6
16	וְכַהֲנִיָּה אֲלִבִּישׁ יִשְׁעָ ⁵	18	3	3	3
	וְחִסְדֶּיהָ רִנָּן וְרִנָּנוּ:		3	3	3
	Total, v. 16		6	= 3 + 3	= 0 + 6
	Strophe 8 Total, v. 15-16		12	= 6 + 6	= 0 + 12
17	שָׁם אֲצַמִּית קָרְן לְדָוִד ⁵	19	4	4	4
	עָרַכְתִּי גֵר לְמִשְׁיָחִי:		3	3	3
	Total, v. 17		7	= 4 + 3	= 0 + 7
	Total, v. 13-17		34	= 18 + 16	= 7 + 27
18	אֹיְבָיו אֲלִבִּישׁ בְּשָׂתָ ⁵	20	3	3	3
	וְעָלְיוּ יָצִיץ גְּזֹרוֹ:		3	3	3
	Total, v. 18		6	= 3 + 3	= 0 + 6
	Strophe 9 Total, v. 17-18		13	= 7 + 6	= 0 + 13
	Total, v. 14-18		33	= 17 + 16	= 0 + 33
	Canticle II.2 Total, v. 13-18		40	= 21 + 19	= 7 + 33
	Canto II Total, v. 11-18		66	= 41 + 25	= 14 + 52
	Total, v. 1-18		129	= 73 + 56	= 26 + 103
	With the heading, v. 1-18		131	= 75 + 56	

Observations

- The logotechnical centre of the psalm is to be found in v. 11a (129 = 63 + 3 + 63), with 63 words on either side. It falls within the middle strophe, v. 11 (9 = 4 + 1 + 4). The number 63 is significant, because it represents the numerical value of מְשִׁיחָךְ, 'your anointed' (13 + 21 + 10 + 8 + 11 = 63). Given that the psalm is a messianic poem, it is a key-word of paramount importance. Psalm 132 shares this feature of the structural function of a key-word with the great majority of psalms in the Songs of Ascents. It is interesting to note that מְשִׁיחָךְ happens to be the 63rd - and last - word of vs. 1-10.

The 3-word logotechnical centre is undoubtedly the consciously designed meaningful centre, which is underscored by its being symbolically surrounded by YHWH's anointed.

נִשְׁבַּע־יְהוָה לְדָוִד

YHWH has sworn an oath to David.

This statement is a terse expression of the gist of the poem: YHWH's promise to David. The pivotal positioning of YHWH's oath is reminiscent of Psalm 89, where YHWH's promise to David (Ps. 89:25-27) is also situated right in the middle of the psalm. See Observation 1 in my Analysis of [Psalm 89](#). The two psalms are evidently very similar both in form and content. However, it is difficult to decide whether they stem from the same author. Psalm 132 was in any case composed after the fashion of Psalm 89.

2. The canto division of the psalm is fundamentally determined by the four speeches: one set of two human speeches and another set of two divine speeches:

Canto I (1-10) Introduction + David's Speech + the Peoples' Speech 63 w.

Canto II (11-18) Introduction + YHWH's First + YHWH's Second Speech 66 w.

Both cantos happen to have 10 verselines and 20 cola, which means that the poem divides into two equal halves in terms of its poetical structure.

Here is a survey of the compositional framework defined by the introductions and the speeches, showing the structuring function of the divine name numbers.

Introductions		Speeches		Total	
		by humans			
Vs. 1-2	12	vs. 3-5	22 David	vs. 1-5	34
	-	vs. 6-10	29 People	vs. 6-10	29
Total:	12	vs. 3-10	51 (3 x 17)	vs. 1-10	63
		by YHWH			
Vs. 11ab	7	vs. 11c-12	19 YHWH	vs. 11-12	26
Vs. 13	7	vs. 14-18	33 YHWH	vs. 13-18	40
Total:	14	Total:	52 (2 x 26)	vs. 11-18	66
Total:	26	Total:	103	vs. 1-18	129

3. The strophic structure is also determined by the introductions and the speeches. My demarcation of the nine strophes – in full agreement with Van der Lugt – shows the following hard breaks in the text: between vs. 2 || 3, vs. 5 || 6, vs. 10 || 11, and 13 || 14. These caesurae should be respected in our search for the strophic components. In my judgement, it is unthinkable that a poet would have devised a strophic structure that is at variance with the basic framework of his poem.

Therefore, the way in which Fokkelman and Christensen* demarcate the strophes in the middle of the psalm is highly questionable. Both disregard the unity of the speech by the people in vs. 6-10, as well as the 26-word divine speech (vs. 11-12) with its introduction.

Fokkelman cuts the people's speech into two parts by presuming a caesura between vs. 9 and 10. By this break between vs. 11ab and 11cd, he also severs the first divine speech from its introduction.

Christensen cuts the people's speech into two parts in another way by presuming a break between vs. 8 and 9. Moreover, by making vs. 9-11 the centre of his 'menorah', he disregards the clear caesura between vs. 10 || 11 and cuts also the divine speech in vs. 11c-12 into two parts (v. 11cd and 12). This, I believe, renders his 'menorah' invalid.

4. In v. 13a we find the 5th occurrence in a series of 7 of the name Zion in the Songs of Ascents (125:1, 126:1, 128:5, **132:13**, 133:3, 134:3), with the present instance at the centre. For the significance and symbolism of this series of 7, see Observation 7 in my Analysis of [Psalm 122](#).

In another series in the Songs of Ascents, the range of 10 occurrences of the root בָּרַךְ, 'to bless', the 6th and 7th instances are to be found in v. 15a. See Observation 6 in my Analysis of [Psalm 124](#), where the first instance occurs. The series culminate in Psalm 134 at the end of the corpus: 124:6, 128:4,5, 129:8 (2x), 132:15 (2x), 134:1,2,3. For particulars, see Observation 3 in my Analysis of [Psalm 134](#).

* See his logoprosodic analysis on www.bibal.net.

5. The divine name numbers and their multiples feature in the following fashion:
- vs. 1-5 **34** (2 x **17**) words in total
 - vs. 6-8 **17** words
 - vs. 1-8 **51** (3 x **17**) words in total, with **26** words before atnach
 - vs. 11-12 **26** words in total
 - vs. 1-10 **51** (3 x **17**) words in total in the speeches
 - vs. 8-13 **51** (3 x **17**) words in total
 - vs. 13-17 **34** (2 x **17**) words in total
 - vs. 14-18 **17** words before atnach.
6. Very striking is the high frequency of the occurrences of the number of fulfilment, **11**: **22** words in vs. 3-5; **11** in vs. 6-7; **11** in vs. 8-9; **33** in vs. 11-13; and **33** in vs. 14-18.
7. The name יהוה occurs 6 times (vs. 1a, 2a, 5a, 8a, 11a and 13a).

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