

# Psalm 145— 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 145

- Being a Song of Praise, Psalm 145 is clearly the follow-up to the ‘new song’, Psalm 144. In the heading, it is significantly labeled “A Song of Praise. Belonging to David” – the only psalm in the Psalter called a תְּהִלָּה. In this capacity, and having a doxology (v. 21), it concludes not only the last Sub-Group of Eleven Psalms (135-145), but also the all but last stage (107-145) of the composition of Book V. See the note at the end of the chart.
- It is the 8<sup>th</sup> and last alphabetic acrostic in the Psalter – see the [General Introduction](#), “The alphabetic acrostics”. The major codices of the Masoretic Text all miss the *nun*-verseline, but on the basis of one manuscript, Kennicott 142, with support from Qumran, the LXX and the Syriac Version, the missing verseline can be restored (indicated by an \*). However, the omission of one verseline was probably intentional.

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

- Van der Lugt: 1-2, 3-4 | 5-7, 8-9 || 10-11, 12-13b || 13c\*-14, 15-16 | 17-18, 19-21 (3 cantos with 10 strophes, 22\* verselines, 45\* cola and 157\* words, supplying the *nun*-verseline\*, v. 13c-d\*).
- Fokkelman: 1-2, 3-4 || 5-7, 8-9 || 10-13b || 13c\*-14, 15-16 || 17-18, 19-20, 21 (5 stanzas with 10 strophes, 22\* verselines, 45\* cola and 156\* words, supplying the missing verseline, v. 13c-d\*, and deleting 1 word (לְהִים) in v. 15b).
- Labuschagne: 1-2, 3 || 4-7, 8-9 || 10-11, 12, 13b || 13c\*-14, 15-16 || 17-20, and 21 (5 cantos and 11 strophes - determined by words spoken to God and about God -, with 22\* verselines, 45\* cola and 157\* words, supplying the missing verseline (v. 13c-d\*) on logotechnical grounds, but suggesting a reason for its omission in MT.

## Logotechnical analysis

- Columns **a** and **b** show the number of words before and after the atnach.
- Column **c**: words addressed to God; **d**: words spoken about God.
- The numbering of the verselines in the restored text coincides with the 22 letters of the alphabet.

		Total	a	b	c	d
1	תְּהִלָּה לְדָוִד Heading	2 = 2 + 0				
	אֲרוֹמְמוֹהָ אֱלֹהֵי תְּמִלָּהּ	א 3	3		3	
	וְאֶבְרַכָּהָ שְׁמִי לְעוֹלָם וָעֶד:	4		4	4	
	Total, v. 1	7 = 3 + 4			7 + 0	
2	בְּכָל-יוֹם אֶבְרַכָּהּ	ב 3	3		3	
	וְאֶהְלֵלָהּ שְׁמִי לְעוֹלָם וָעֶד:	4		4	4	
	Total, v. 2	7 = 3 + 4			7 + 0	
	Strophe 1 Total, v. 1-2	14 = 6 + 8			14 + 0	
3	גְּדוֹל יְהוָה וּמְהִלָּל מְאֹד	ג 4	4			4
	וְלִגְדֵלְתוֹ אֵין חֶמֶר:	3		3		3
	Strophe 2 Total, v. 3	7 = 4 + 3			0 + 7	
	Canto I Total, v. 1-3	21 = 10 + 11			14 + 0	

4	דָּוָר לְדָוָר יִשְׁבַּח מִעֲשֵׂיָהָּ וְגִבּוֹרֵתֶיךָ וְגִידּוֹ: Total, v. 4	ד	4	4	4		
			<u>2</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>2</u>		
			6	= 4	+ 2	= 6	+ 0
5	<b>כָּבוֹד = 23</b> הַדָּר הַכּוֹד הוֹדָהּ וְדַבְּרֵי נִפְלְאוֹתֶיךָ אֲשִׁיחָה: Total, v. 5 Total, v. 2-5	ה	3	3	3		
			<u>3</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>3</u>		
			6	= 3	+ 3	= 6	+ 0
			<b>26</b>	= 14	+ 12	= 19	+ 7
6	וַעֲזֹז נוֹרְאוֹתֶיךָ יֹאמְרוּ וְגִדּוֹלְתֶךָ אֲסַפְּרֶנָּה: Total, v. 6 Total, v. 4-6	ו	3	3	3		
			<u>2</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>2</u>		
			5	= 3	+ 2	= 5	+ 0
			<b>17</b>	= 10	+ 7	= 17	+ 0
7	זָכַר רַב־טוֹבֶךָ יִבְעֵוּ וְצַדִּיקְתֶּךָ יִרְגְּנוּ: Total, v. 7 Total, v. 5-7 Strophe 3 Total, v. 4-7	ז	4	4	4		
			<u>2</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>2</u>		
			6	= 4	+ 2	= 6	+ 0
			<b>17</b>	= 10	+ 7	= 17	+ 0
			<b>23</b>	= 14	+ 9	= 23	+ 0
8	חֲנוּן וְרַחוּם יִהְיֶה אֲרָךְ אַפִּים וְגִדְל־חֶסֶד: Total, v. 8	ח	3	3	3		
			<u>4</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>4</u>		
			7	= 3	+ 4	= 0	+ 7
9	טוֹב־יִהְיֶה לְכָל וְרַחֲמָיו עַל־כָּל־מַעֲשָׂיו: Total, v. 9 Strophe 4 Total, v. 8-9 Canto II Total, v. 4-9 Total, v. 1-9	ט	3	3	3		
			<u>4</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>4</u>		
			7	= 3	+ 4	= 0	+ 7
			<b>14</b>	= 6	+ 8	= 0	+ 14
			<b>37</b>	= 20	+ 17	= 23	+ 14
			<b>58</b>	= 30	+ 28	= 37	+ 21
10	יִדְוֶה יִהְיֶה כָּל־מַעֲשֵׂיָהָּ וְחִסְדֵיךָ <span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">יִבְרַכְכוּכָהּ</span> <sup>5</sup> : Total, v. 10 Total, v. 7-10	י	4	4	4		
			<u>2</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>2</u>		
			6	= 4	+ 2	= 6	+ 0
			<b>26</b>	= 14	+ 12	= 12	+ 14
11	<b>כָּבוֹד = 23</b> מְלֻכוֹתֶךָ יֹאמְרוּ וְגִבּוֹרְתֶךָ יִדְבְּרוּ: Total, v. 11 Strophe 5 Total, v. 10-11 Total, v. 1-11	י	3	3	3		
			<u>2</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>2</u>		
			5	= 3	+ 2	= 5	+ 0
			<b>11</b>	= 7	+ 4	= 11	+ 0
			<b>69</b>	= 37	+ 32	= 48	+ 21
12	לְהוֹדִיעַ לְבָנֵי הָאָדָם גִּבּוֹרְתָיו וְכִבּוֹד הַדָּר מְלֻכוֹתָו: Strophe 6 Total, v. 12	ל	4	4	4		
			<u>3</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>3</u>		
			7	= 4	+ 3	= 0	+ 7
13a-b	מְלֻכוֹתֶךָ מְלֻכוֹת <span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">כָּל־</span> עַל־מִים וּמִמֶּשְׁלֶתֶךָ בְּכָל־דָּוָר וְדָוָר: 157 = 78 + <span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">1</span> + 78 157 = 77 + 3 + 77 Strophe 7 Total, v. 13a-b Middle letters: <span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">מִלְכֵי</span> Canto III Total, v. 10-13b 22 = 9 + <span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">4</span> + 9 Total, v. 5-13b Total, v. 1-13b	מ	4	4	4		
			<u>4</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>4</u>		
			8	= 4	+ 4	= 8	+ 0
			<b>26</b>	= 15	+ 11	= 19	+ 7
			<b>57</b>	= 31	+ 26	= 36	+ 21
			<b>84</b>	= 45	+ 39	= 56	+ 28

13c-d*	Missing verseline restored	נאמן יהוה בכל-דבריו וחסיד בכל-מעשיו:	נ	4	4		4
	See note below the chart	Total, v. 13c-d		3		3	3
		Total, v. 11-13d		7	= 4 + 3	= 0 + 7	7
14		סומך יהוה לכל-הנפלים ויוקף לכל-הכפופים:	ס	4	4		4
		Total, v. 14		3		3	3
		Strophe 8 Total, v. 13c-14		7	= 4 + 3	= 0 + 7	7
15		עיני-כל אליה ישברו ואתה נותן-להם את-אכלם בעתו:	ע	4	4		4
		Total, v. 15		6		6	6
		Total, v. 14-15		10	= 4 + 6	= 10 + 0	10
16		פוחת את-ידה ומשביע לכל-חי רצון:	פ	3	3		3
		Total, v. 16		4		4	4
		Strophe 9 Total, v. 15-16		7	= 3 + 4	= 7 + 0	7
		Canto IV Total, v. 13c-16		17	= 7 + 10	= 17 + 0	17
17		צדיק יהוה בכל-הדרכיו וחסיד בכל-מעשיו:	צ	4	4		4
		Total, v. 17		3		3	3
		Total, v. 17-18		7	= 4 + 3	= 0 + 7	7
18		קרוב יהוה לכל-קראיו לכל אשר יקראהו באמת:	ק	4	4		4
		Total, v. 18		4		4	4
		Total, v. 17-18		8	= 4 + 4	= 0 + 8	8
19		רצון-יראיו יעשה ואת-שועתם ישמע ויושיעם:	ר	3	3		3
		Total, v. 19		4		4	4
		Total, v. 19-20		7	= 3 + 4	= 0 + 7	7
20		שומר יהוה את-כל-אהביו ואת כל-הרשעים ישמיד:	ש	5	5		5
		Total, v. 20		4		4	4
		Strophe 10 Total, v. 17-20		9	= 5 + 4	= 0 + 9	9
		Total, v. 17-20		31	= 16 + 15	= 0 + 31	31
21	Doxology	תהלת יהוה יברכפי ויברך כל-בשר שם קדשו לעולם ועד:	ת	4	4		4
		Strophe 11 Total, v. 21		5		5	5
		Total, v. 14-21		2		2	2
		Canto V Total, v. 17-21		11	= 11 + 0	= 0 + 11	11
		Numerical v. 5-13b		66	= 38 + 28	= 17 + 49	66
		Chiasmus v. 13c-21		42	= 27 + 15	= 0 + 42	42
		Total, v. 5-21		57	= 31 + 26	= 36 + 21	57
		Total, v. 1-21		73	= 42 + 31	= 17 + 56	73
		With the heading, v. 1-21		130	= 73 + 57	= 53 + 77	130
				157	= 87 + 70	= 73 + 84	157
				159	= 89 + 70		159

- The psalm would be a perfect alphabetic acrostic, were it not that, for some reason, it misses the verseline with initial *nun* after v. 13 in MT. However, we have the good fortune that one Hebrew manuscript, edited by B. Kennicott, *Vetus Testamentum Hebraicum*, 1780, 142, contains the missing verse (v. 13c-d in the chart). Its existence in Biblical times is witnessed by 11QPs<sup>a</sup>, LXX and the Syriac Version. I shall provide logotechnical evidence to show that there is every reason to supply the missing verseline: "Faithful is YHWH in all his words, and gracious in all his deeds."

Christensen maintains MT on the strength of ‘the canonical injunction’ – Deut. 4:2. See Observation 2 in his analysis at: <http://www.bibal.net/>. He has put forward the supposition that the author used an earlier, ‘original Psalm of David’, an alphabetic acrostic, which may have contained the *nun*-verseline, and that he *deliberately* omitted it ‘to create a remarkable numerical composition’. In my judgement, there is no evidence for this. Moreover, I think it very unlikely that an author would ruin a perfect acrostic for logotechnical reasons. Logotechnique has never been a purpose in itself, and certainly not to the detriment of form and content. Quite the contrary, it always serves the form and content.

The question remains, however, whether the *nun*-verseline was not *deliberately omitted* in MT. And in terms of the number of verselines in Psalms 107-145 this may well be the case. As Psalm 145 stands in MT, it has 21 verselines, bringing the total number of verselines in Psalms 107-145 to precisely **680** (40 x **17**). If this is correct, Psalm 145 and its doxology (v. 21), may have been the original conclusion of Book V, as recently suggested by Jean-Luc Vesco, *Le psautier de David: Traduit et commenté*, Vol. I, Paris: Cerf, 2006. This implies that the Concluding Hallel (146-150), could have been added by a later redactor. However, in my view, Psalm 145 only marks the all but last stage in the composition of Book V (107-145), which was logically followed by the Concluding Hallel (146-150) stemming from the same hand as 135-145. See the [Introduction to Book V](#) and the [Compositional Structure of the Psalter](#).

## Observations

1. In terms of the 157 words of the restored text, its logotechnical centre is כָּל, ‘all’, in v. 13a (157 = **78** + **1** + **78**), flanked by 3 x **26** words on either side – compare [Psalm 146](#)! By adding one word on either side, we get three pivotal words, which may safely be regarded as the consciously designed meaningful centre (**77** + **3** + **77**):

מְלֻכּוּת כָּל-עֲלָמִים ‘a kingship for all times’.

The meaningful centre is a precise reflection of the gist of the poem as expressed in the *aleph*- and *beth*-verselines, YHWH’s **eternal kingship**:

אֲרֹמְמֶךָ אֱלֹהֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ ^ וְאֶבְרַכְּךָ שֵׁמֶךָ לְעוֹלָם וָעֶד :  
בְּכָל-יּוֹם אֶבְרַכְּךָ ^ וְאֶתְלַלְּתָה שֵׁמֶךָ לְעוֹלָם וָעֶד :

I shall extol you, my God, **my King** // and I shall **bless** your **name for ever and ever**.  
Every day I shall **bless** you // and I shall praise your **name for ever and ever**.

The idea of the **everlasting blessing** due to YHWH and the word ‘name’, representing his presence, are repeated in the *taw*-verseline, v. 21:

תְּהַלֵּל תְּהַלֵּל יְהוָה יְדַבֵּר-פִּי וּיְבָרֵךְ כָּל-בֶּשֶׂר שֵׁם קִדְשׁוֹ לְעוֹלָם וָעֶד :

The praise of YHWH my mouth shall declare // and all flesh shall **bless** his holy **name for ever and ever**.

Note also how the idea of YHWH’s **eternal kingship** reverberates in v. 13b: ‘**your reign shall last for all generations**.’ Additionally, the number **77** symbolically expresses the idea of eternity on either side of the meaningful centre: the product of **7**, the number of fullness, and **11**, the number of fulfilment.

In sum, the 3-word meaningful centre is firmly embedded in the logotechnical middle in such a way that its essential idea also features at the beginning and end of the poem.

2. The rhetorical middle of the poem is constituted by the middle canto, **vs. 10-13b**, which coincides precisely with the **3** middle strophes (11 = 4 + **3** + 4) and with the **4** middle letters of the alphabet (22 = 9 + **4** + 9). Worth noting in passing is that the middle letters, **י, כ, ל, מ**, when reversed, read **מְלֻכִי**, ‘my King’! This is a fine example of a hidden acrostic. See Observation 2 in my Analysis of [Psalm 119](#) and [Psalm 9-10](#).

The striking pivotal position of the rhetorical middle, in combination with the fact that it is made up of exactly **26** words, renders it a very plausible alternative meaningful centre. See Observations 4 and 5 below.

- The fact that the word תְּהַלֵּל, 'praise', occurs in the concluding *tau*-verseline, obviously gave rise to the remarkable 2-word heading: לְהַלֵּל לַיהוָה, A Psalm of Praise. Belonging to David. At the same time, this explains the use here of the term תְּהַלֵּל, 'praise', which occurs only here in a psalm heading. The editors/composers of the Psalter deliberately designed this 2-word heading for the benefit of the readers/reciters of the psalm as a striking device for inclusion together with the first word of the *tau*-verseline: תְּהַלֵּל.
- In vs. 1b and 2a, and 10b and 21b, we find the 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> occurrences of the root בָּרַךְ, 'to bless' in a series of 7 in Psalms 135-147 (135:21a, 144:1a, 145:1b, 2a, 10b, 21b, 147:13b). Please consult Observation 5 in my Analysis of [Psalm 144](#) as well as Observation 4 in that of [Psalm 147](#), where we find the last instance.
- It has proved to be very difficult to identify the strophic structure of the psalm; no wonder that there is little agreement among scholars endeavouring to do so. I propose to resolve the problem here, as in the preceding psalm, by dividing the text on the basis of words spoken to God and words spoken about him:

Strophe 1	vs. 1-2	Words addressed to God	14 words	
Strophe 2	v. 3	Words spoken about God	7 words	
Strophe 3	vs. 4-7	Words addressed to God	23 words	
Strophe 4	vs. 8-9	Words spoken about God	14 words	
Strophe 5	vs. 10-11	Words addressed to God	11 words	} 26
Strophe 6	v. 12	Words spoken about God	7 words	
Strophe 7	v. 13a-b	Words addressed to God	8 words	
Strophe 8	vs. 13c*-14	Words spoken about God	14 words	
Strophe 9	vs. 15-16	Words addressed to God	17 words	
Strophe 10	vs. 17-20	Words spoken about God	31 +	
Strophe 11	v. 21	Words spoken about God	11 = 42 (6x7) words	

The survey reveals that the number of fullness and its multiples play an important role, especially in connection with the words spoken about God (7 + 14 + 7 + 14 + 42), while the *kabod* number 23 and the divine name number 17 determine the amount of words addressed to God. I interpret this as evidence supporting the present strophic structure. The word כְּבוֹד, 'glory' (11 + 2 + 6 + 4 = 23) appears in 5a and 11a. Vs. 1-11 is made up of 69 (3 x 23) words, and Strophes 3 and 5 have altogether 34 (2 x 17) words.

- In broad outline, my canto structure is rather similar to Fokkelman's stanza structure and Van der Lugt's canto/canticle structure:

Canto I	vs. 1-3	2 strophes	21 words
Canto II	vs. 4-9	2 strophes	37 words
Canto III	vs. 10-13b	3 strophes	26 words
Canto IV	vs. 13c*-16	2 strophes	31 words
Canto V	vs. 17-21	2 strophes	42 words.

Significantly, Canto III, which contains the 4 middle alphabetic verselines, coincides with the 3 middle strophes - being flanked by 4 strophes - and is made up of 26 words.

- The unity of vs. 5-21, including the *nun*-verseline, is buttressed by the fact that it consists of 130 (5 x 26) words, and by the obvious numerical chiasmus tying together vs. 5-13b and 13c\*-21 – see the chart and compare Observation 4 in my Analysis of [Psalm 143](#).
- The number of fullness features in 7 instances in which the speaker acts:
  - v. 1a I shall extol you
  - v. 1b I shall bless you
  - v. 2a I shall bless you
  - v. 2b I shall praise your name
  - v. 5 I shall meditate on the glorious splendour of your majesty and wonders
  - v. 6b I shall declare your greatness
  - v. 21 my mouth shall speak of the praise of YHWH.

Cantos IV and V, vs. 13c\*-21, list **14** beneficial acts or qualities of YHWH for the benefit of all except the wicked. Note that the 15<sup>th</sup> act is of a totally different order: *he destroys all the wicked* (v. 20b); it does not belong to the series of 14!

v.13c* he <b>is faithful</b>	v. 17a he <b>is just</b>
v. 13d* he <b>is gracious</b>	v. 17b he <b>is kind</b>
v. 14a he <b>upholds</b> all who stumble	v. 18a he <b>is near</b> to all who call him
v. 14b he <b>raises up</b> all who are bowed down	v. 19a he <b>fulfils</b> their desire
v. 15b you <b>give</b> them their food	v. 19b he <b>hears</b> their cry
v. 16a you <b>open</b> your hand	v. 19b he <b>saves</b> them
v. 16b you <b>satisfy</b> the desire of all that lives	v. 20a he <b>preserves</b> who love him.

In the present sub-group (135-145), similar series of **7** items are to be found in Psalms [136](#), [139](#) and [144](#). Please consult the relevant Observations in my Analyses of these psalms. Compare also the **11** (4 + 7) deeds of YHWH in [Psalm 146](#), the **7** subjects urged to praise YHWH in [Psalm 148](#) and the **7** ways of praising him in [Psalm 150](#).

9. The kabod- and divine name numbers feature in the following fashion:

vs. 2-5	<b>26</b> words in total
vs. 4-6	<b>17</b> words in total
vs. 5-7	<b>17</b> words in total
vs. 4-7	<b>23</b> words in total
vs. 4-9	<b>17</b> words after atnach
vs. 7-10	<b>26</b> words in total
vs. 1-11	<b>69</b> words in total, with <b>32</b> after atnach
vs. 10-13b	<b>26</b> words in total, with <b>15</b> before and <b>11</b> after atnach
vs. 5-13b	<b>26</b> words after atnach
vs. 14-15	<b>17</b> words in total
vs. 15-16	<b>17</b> words in total
vs. 5-21	<b>130</b> (5 x <b>26</b> ) words in total.

10. The name יהוה appears 10x (3a, 8a, 9a, 10a, 13c\*, 14a, 17a, 18a, 20a and 21a) and אֱלֹהֵי only once (v. 1a).

© 2009  
 Dr. C.J. Labuschagne Senior Lecturer in Semitic Languages (retired),  
 Brinkhorst 44 University of Pretoria, South Africa  
 9751 AT Haren (Gron) and  
 The Netherlands Professor of Old Testament (retired),  
[labuschagne.ci@planet.nl](mailto:labuschagne.ci@planet.nl) University of Groningen, The Netherlands