

Psalm 147— 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 147

- The psalm is a fine example of a meticulously designed numerical composition with a lucid, regular rhetorical structure. Additionally, being a song of praise, it exhibits the typical characteristics of a hymn, particularly the use of stereotyped verbal forms and series of 7 and 11, as in Psalm 145, 146, 148, 149 and 150.

Strophic structure - Canto/Stanza boundary: ||

- Van der Lugt and Labuschagne: 1-3, 4-6 || 7-8, 9-11 || 12-14, 15-17, 18-20 (3 cantos with 7 strophes, 21 verselines and 42 cola, supplying the presumably missing colon, v. 8d).
- Fokkelman: similarly, except that he maintains MT and finds 20 verselines with 41 cola).

Logotechnical analysis

- Columns **a** and **b** show the number of words before and after the atnach.
- Column **c**: words in the hymnic passages; **d**: words in their introductions.
- The numbering of the verselines is shown in **brown**.

| | | Total | a | b | c | d |
|--------|--|-----------------------|---|---|---|--------|
| 1 | הַלְלוּ-יְהוָה Hallelu-yah | 2 = 2 + 0 | | | | |
| * * | כִּי-טוֹב זְמִרָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ כִּי-נִשְׁעִים נְאוּהָ תְהִלָּה: | 4 4 | 4 | 4 | | 4 4 |
| | Total, v. 1 | 8 = 4 + 4 = 0 + 8 | | | | |
| 2 | בּוֹנֵה יְרוּשָׁלַם יְהוָה נְדָחֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל יִכְנֹס: | 3 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 |
| | Total, v. 2 | 6 = 3 + 3 = 6 + 0 | | | | |
| 3 | הֲרַפָּא לְשִׁבּוּרֵי לֵב וּמַחֲפֵשׁ לְעַצְבוֹתָם: | 3 2 | 3 | 2 | 3 | 2 |
| | Total, v. 3 | 5 = 3 + 2 = 5 + 0 | | | | |
| | Strophe 1 Total, v. 1-3 | 19 = 10 + 9 = 11 + 8 | | | | |
| 4 | מוֹנֵה מִסְפֵּר לְכוֹכְבֵים לְכָל־שָׁמַיִם יִקְרָא: | 4 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 |
| | Total, v. 4 | 6 = 3 + 3 = 6 + 0 | | | | |
| | Total, v. 2-4 | 17 = 9 + 8 = 17 + 0 | | | | |
| 5 | נְדוּל אֲדוֹנֵינוּ וְרַב-כֹּחַ לְתַבּוּנָתוֹ אֵין מִסְפֵּר: | 5 3 | 4 | 3 | 4 | 3 |
| | Total, v. 5 | 7 = 4 + 3 = 7 + 0 | | | | |
| 6 | מְעוֹרֵר עֲנִוִים יְהוָה מִשְׁפִּיל רָשָׁעִים עַד-יָרֵךְ: | 6 4 | 3 | 3 | 4 | 3 |
| | Total, v. 6 | 7 = 3 + 4 = 7 + 0 | | | | |
| | Strophe 2 Total, v. 4-6 | 20 = 10 + 10 = 20 + 0 | | | | |
| | Canto I Total, v. 1-6 | 39 = 20 + 19 = 31 + 8 | | | | |

| | | | | | | | |
|----|---|----|---|---|---|---|---|
| 7 | עָנוּ לַיהוָה בַּתּוֹדָה [^] זָמְרוּ לְאֱלֹהֵינוּ בְּכִנּוֹר: Total, v. 7 Total, v. 4-7 | 7 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | $6 = 3 + 3 = 0 + 6$ $26 = 13 + 13 = 20 + 6$ |
| 8 | הַמְכֶסֶה שָׁמַיִם בְּעֵבִים הַמְכִין לָאָרֶץ מְטָר [^] הַמְצַמִּית הַרִים הַצִּיר וַעֲשֵׂב לְעֵבֶרֶת הָאָדָם: Total, v. 8 Strophe 3 Total, v. 7-8 | 8 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | $9/12 = 6 + 3/6 = 9/12 + 0$ $15/18 = 9 + 6/9 = 9/12 + 6$ |
| 9 | נוֹתַן לְבַהֲמָה לְחֶמְדָּה [^] לְבַנֵּי עָרֶב אֲשֶׁר יִקְרְאוּ: Total, v. 9 | 9 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | $7 = 3 + 4 = 7 + 0$ |
| 10 | Middle verseline Middle cola: 20+2+20 Middle words: 140 = 68 + 4 + 68 לא בְּנוֹרֶת הַסּוֹס יִחְפֹּץ [^] לְאֶבְשׁוּקֵי הָאִישׁ יִרְצֶה: Total, v. 10 | 10 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | $8 = 4 + 4 = 8 + 0$ |
| 11 | רוֹצֵה יְהוָה אֶת־יִרְאָיו [^] אֶת־הַמְּיַחֲלִים לְחֶסֶדּוֹ: Total, v. 11 Strophe 4 Total, v. 9-11 Total, v. 8-11 Canto II Total, v. 7-11 Total, v. 1-11 | 11 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | $31/34 = 17 + 14/17 = 31/34 + 0$ $37/40 = 20 + 17/20 = 31/34 + 6$ $76/79 = 40 + 36/39 = 62/65 + 14$ |
| 12 | שָׁבְחֵי יְרוּשָׁלַם אֶת־יְהוָה [^] הַלְלֵי אֱלֹהֶיךָ צִיּוֹן: Total, v. 12 | 12 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | $7 = 4 + 3 = 0 + 7$ |
| 13 | כִּי־חֹק בְּרִיחֵי שְׁעָרֶיךָ [^] בְּנִיחַ בְּקַרְבֶּיךָ : בְּרִיחַ The 7 th occurrence of this keyword in a series of 7 in Psalms 135-150 Total, v. 13 | 13 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | $7 = 4 + 3 = 7 + 0$ |
| 14 | הַשֵּׁם־גְּבוּלְךָ שְׁלוֹמֶם [^] חֶלֶב חַטִּיִּים יִשְׂבִיעֶךָ: Total, v. 14 Strophe 5 Total, v. 12-14 Total, v. 8-14 | 14 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | $6 = 3 + 3 = 6 + 0$ $20 = 11 + 9 = 13 + 7$ $51/54 = 28 + 23/26 = 44/47 + 7$ |
| 15 | הַשְׁלַח אֲמַרְתוּ אָרֶץ [^] עַד־מְהֵרָה יְרוּיַח דְּבָרוֹ: Total, v. 15 Total, v. 11-15 | 15 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | $7 = 3 + 4 = 7 + 0$ $34 = 18 + 16 = 27 + 7$ |
| 16 | הַנִּתֵּן שְׁלֹג כַּצֶּמֶר [^] כְּפֹר כְּאֶפֶר יִפּוֹר: Total, v. 16 | 16 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | $6 = 3 + 3 = 6 + 0$ |
| 17 | מִשְׁלִיחַ קָרְחוֹ כַּפְתִּימֶם [^] לְפָנַי קָרְחוֹ מִי יַעֲמֹד: Total, v. 17 Strophe 6 Total, v. 15-17 Total, v. 14-17 Total, v. 13-17 | 17 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | $7 = 3 + 4 = 7 + 0$ $20 = 9 + 11 = 20 + 0$ $26 = 12 + 14 = 26 + 0$ $33 = 16 + 17 = 33 + 0$ |

| | | | | | |
|--------|--|---------|--------------|----------------|----------|
| 18 | ישלח דברו וימסם ^א | 19 | 3 | 3 | 3 |
| | ישב רוחו ויזלו־מים: | | 4 | 4 | 4 |
| | Total, v. 18 | | 7 | = 3 + 4 | = 7 + 0 |
| 19 | מניד דבריו ליעקב ^א | 20 | 3 | 3 | 3 |
| | חקיו ומשפטיו לישראל: | | 3 | 3 | 3 |
| | Total, v. 19 | | 6 | = 3 + 3 | = 6 + 0 |
| | Total, v. 16-19 | | 26 | = 12 + 14 | = 26 + 0 |
| 20 *** | לא עשה כן לכל־גוי | 21 | 5 | 5 | 5 |
| | ומשפטים בל־ידעם תללו־יה: | | 3 | 3 | 3 |
| | Total, v. 20 | | 8 | = 8 + 0 | = 8 + 0 |
| | Strophe 7 Total, v. 18-20 | | 21 | = 14 + 7 | = 21 + 0 |
| | Total, v. 16-20 | | 34 | = 20 + 14 | = 34 + 0 |
| | Canto III Total, v. 12-20 | | 61 | = 34 + 27 | = 54 + 7 |
| | Total, v. 7-20 | 98/101 | = 54 + 44/47 | = 85/88 + 13 | |
| | Total, v. 1-20 | 137/140 | = 74 + 63/66 | = 116/119 + 21 | |
| | With the two <i>hallelu-yahs</i> , v. 1-20 | 141/144 | = 78 + 63/66 | | |

* In the exclamations כִּי־טוֹב, 'How good', and כִּי־נָעִים, 'How pleasant', the particle כִּי primarily has an asseverative function, reinforcing an affirmation. However, since the addition of the *hallelu-yah*, the particle apparently came to be understood as a conjunction meaning 'for', in the synagogal liturgy. Compare the RSV: "Praise the LORD! For it is good....". The REB, e.g., renders correctly: "How good is it...how pleasant...".

** Seeing the strikingly irregular *tricoloric* verseline of v. 8 in a poem made up of *bicoloric* verselines, there is every reason to follow some LXX manuscripts and the Latin Version supplying the presumably missing colon, v. 8d: ויעשב לעבדת האדם, 'and plants for the use of mankind' (quoted from Ps. 104:14b). As I shall show below, there are logotechnical considerations supporting the restoration. The word-count of the restored text is highlighted.

*** With LXX, the Syriac Version and Targum (see BHS), I reprint the MT reading בל־ידעום, 'they have never known them', to read בל־ידעם, 'he has never taught them'. A Qumran fragment, which reads בל־הזריעם, 'he has never taught them', supports the proposed repointing.

Observations

1. The logotechnical middle of the restored text is v. 10b (140 = 68 + 4 + 68), significantly flanked by 4 x 17 words on either side:

לא־בשוקי האיש ירצה: 'he takes no pleasure in the legs of a man'.

The logotechnical centre is in itself meaningful, but since it falls within the middle verseline (21 = 10 + 1 + 10), which coincides with the 2 middle cola (42 = 20 + 2 + 20), the entire v. 10 is a more plausible consciously designed meaningful centre:

לא בנבורת הסוס יחפץ^א לא־בשוקי האיש ירצה:

He does not delight in the strength of a horse // nor does he take pleasure in men's legs.

2. The psalm has an perfectly regular strophic structure arranged in a menorah pattern:

| | | | | | |
|-----------|-----|-----------|--------------|--------|-----------|
| vs. 1-3 | I | Strophe 1 | 3 verselines | 6 cola | 19 words |
| vs. 4-6 | | Strophe 2 | 3 verselines | 6 cola | 20 words |
| vs. 7-8 | II | Strophe 3 | 3 verselines | 6 cola | 18 words |
| vs. 9-11 | | Strophe 4 | 3 verselines | 6 cola | 22 words |
| vs. 12-14 | III | Strophe 5 | 3 verselines | 6 cola | 20 words |
| vs. 15-17 | | Strophe 6 | 3 verselines | 6 cola | 20 words |
| vs. 18-20 | | Strophe 7 | 3 verselines | 6 cola | 21 words. |

3. In terms of content, there is another framework based on the hymnic passages (Column c) and their introductions (Column d), which overlies the rhetorical structure:

- v. 1 **How good is it to sing psalms of praise to YHWH!**
- vs. 2-6 **Eleven** characteristics of YHWH
- v. 7 **Sing to YHWH with thanksgiving!**
- vs. 8-11 **Seven** acts performed by YHWH and things he delights in
- v. 12 **Sing to YHWH, Jerusalem! Praise your God, Zion!**
- vs. 13-20 **Fourteen** deeds performed by YHWH for the benefit of Israel.

As in Psalms 145, 146, 148 and 150, the author uses the number of fullness, **7**, and the number of fulfilment, **11**, to create series: in this case, to enumerate YHWH's activities. Exactly **119** (**7 x 17**) words are used to describe his activities (Column c), and **21** (**3 x 7**) for the introductions (Column d).

In addition to this, Psalm 147 has **7** strophes, **21** (**3 x 7**) verselines, **42** (**6 x 7**) cola and **140** (**20 x 7**) words. Needless to say, omitting the restored colon of v. 8d would wreak havoc with these beautiful statistics.

The 11 characteristic deeds and qualities of YHWH listed in vs. 2-6:

1. **he builds up** Jerusalem
2. **he gathers** the outcasts of Israel
3. **he heals** the broken-hearted
4. **and he binds up** their wounds
 1. **he numbers** the stars one by one
 2. **he calls** each by name
 3. **great is** our Lord
 4. **and surpassing in power**
 5. **his skill is beyond telling**
 6. **he lifts up** the downtrodden
 7. **he casts** the wicked to the ground.

Compare the pattern of the **14** deeds in vs. 13-20.

The 7 acts performed by YHWH and things he delights in, mentioned in vs. 8-11:

1. **he covers** the sky with clouds
2. **he provides** rain for the earth
3. **he makes** the hills sprout grass and plants for the use of mankind
4. **he gives** food to the cattle and to the ravens
5. **he does not delight** in the strength of a horse
6. **he does not take pleasure** in men's legs
7. **he takes pleasure** in those who fear him, who wait for his love.

The 14 deeds performed by YHWH for the benefit of Israel listed in vs. 13-20:

1. *he strengthens the bars of your gates*
2. *he blesses your inhabitants within you*
3. *he makes peace in your borders*
4. *he satisfies you with the finest wheat*
 5. **he sends his command to the earth**
 6. **he gives snow like wool**
 7. **he sprinkles hoarfrost like ashes**
 8. **he scatters his ice like morsels**
 9. **he sends his word**
 10. **and he melts them**
 11. **he makes his wind blow**
12. *he has declared his words to Jacob*
13. *he has not dealt thus with any other nation*
14. *he has never taught them his ordinances.*

The **14** activities are in three parts, according to the pattern **4 + 7 + 3**: the first **4 deeds** together with the *last 3* (altogether **7**) relate to YHWH's care for *the city of Jerusalem and the land of Israel*, while the middle **7** deeds have to do with his control of *the climate*.

4. In v. 13b we find the 7th and last occurrence of the key-word בָּרַךְ, 'to bless', in the series of **7** in Psalms 135-150 (135:21a, 144:1a, 145:1b, 2a, 10b, 21b, 147:13b). Together with the **10** occurrences in the Songs of Ascents (124:6, 128:4, 5, 129:8a, 8b, 132:15a (2x), 134:1, 2 and 3) – see Observation 3 in my Analysis of [Psalm 134](#) – there are altogether **17** instances in Psalms 120-150.

The blessing commanded by YHWH on Zion (Psalm 133!) and carried out by the priests (Psalm 134!) runs as a red thread through the fabric of the text and reaches its culmination point here. Since there is every reason to believe that the use of this numerical device is not mere coincidence, it can be considered additional evidence for the compositional unity of these 31 psalms (120-150).

5. The divine name numbers feature in the following fashion:

| | |
|-----------|---|
| vs. 2-4 | 17 words in total |
| vs. 4-7 | 26 words in total |
| vs. 8-12 | 34 words, with 17 before and 17 after atnach |
| vs. 8-14 | 26 words after atnach |
| vs. 11-15 | 34 (2 x 17) words in total |
| vs. 14-17 | 26 words in total |
| vs. 13-17 | 17 words after atnach |
| vs. 16-19 | 26 words in total |
| vs. 16-20 | 34 (2 x 17) words in total |
| vs. 12-20 | 34 (2 x 17) words before atnach |
| vs. 1-20 | 119 (7 x 17) words in the hymnic passages. |

5. The name יהוה appears 5 times (vs. 2a, 6a, 7a, 11a and 12a), the word אֱלֹהִים 3 times (vs. 1a, 7b and 12b), and אֲדֹנָיִנוּ, 'our Lord', once (v. 5a). The form יהִ occurs 2x (in each of the *hallelu-yahs*).

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