

# Psalm 7— Logotechnical Analysis

## Guidelines

- Please read the [General Introduction](#) as well as the Introduction to [Book I](#).
- For common features found in the numerical analysis charts, see the "[Key to the charts](#)".

## Specific features of Psalm 7

- The psalm consists of two distinct parts, vs. 2-9a and vs. 9b-18, each having its own structure and meaningful centre. As the psalm now stands in MT, the two parts form an unmistakable structural unity with a common meaningful centre.
- In addition to the division of the text by atnach, the author employed the direction of address to give structure to the text: in the first part, the speaker addresses God directly, and in the second part, he speaks about him in general.
- The numerical chiasmus - a device to weave different sections of the text together - features in no less than three instances. This is the first example in the Book of Psalms – see the General Introduction under "Special patterns".
- The 7 occurrences of the name YHWH may be interpreted as consciously devised to emphasize the unity of the text. The middle occurrence (v. 9a) marks the end of Part 1.

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

- Van der Lugt discerns two relatively independent psalms:
  - 7:2-9a** 2-3, 4-6, 7-9a (1 canto and 3 strophes, with 7 verselines and 17 cola);
  - 7:9b-18** 9b-10, 11-12 || 13-14, 15-17, 18 (2 cantos and 5 strophes, with 11 verselines and 22 cola; together: 3 cantos, 8 strophes, with 18 verselines and 39 cola).
- Fokkelman regards the psalm as a single composition: 2-3, 4-6, 7-9a || 9b-10 || 11-12, 13-14, 15-17, 18 (3 cantos and 8 strophes, with 19 verselines and 39 cola, taking vs. 7-9a as 3 bicolic verselines instead of (like Van der Lugt) 2 tricoloc verselines).
- Labuschagne regards the psalm as a single composition: 2-3, 4-6, 7-9a || 9b-10, 11-12 || 13-14, 15-17, 18 (3 cantos and 8 strophes, with 19 verselines and 39 cola, taking v. 9a as a separate verseline).
- For an overview of other divisions of the text, see Van der Lugt, CAS, Psalm 7, § 6.

## 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 is shown in **brown**.

		Total	a	b	c	d
1	שָׁנוּן לְדוֹד אֲשֶׁר־שָׁר לַיהוָה <sup>1</sup>	5	5			
	עַל־דְּבַר־כּוֹשׁ בְּנִימִינִי:	5		5		
	Heading, v. 1	10	= 5	+ 5		
2	יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי בָהּ חֲסִיתִי <sup>1</sup>	4	4		4	
	הוֹשִׁיעֵנִי מִכָּל־רֶדְפִי וְהַצִּילֵנִי:	4		4	4	
	Total, v. 2	8	= 4	+ 4	= 8	+ 0
3	פָּן־יִטְרַף כְּאַרְיֵה נֹפֵשׁ <sup>2</sup>	4	4		4	
	פֶּרֶק וְאִין מַצִּיל:	3		3	3	
	Total, v. 3	7	= 4	+ 3	= 7	+ 0
	<b>Strophe 1</b>	<b>15</b>	= 8	+ 7	= 15	+ 0
	<b>Total, v. 2-3</b>					

4	אֱלֹהֵי אִם־עֲשִׂיתִי זֹאת־ <sup>2</sup> <b>יְהוָה</b> 3	5	5	5
	אִם־יִשְׁעוֹל בְּכַפִּי:	4	4	4
	Total, v. 4	9	= 5 + 4	= 9 + 0
	Total, v. 2-4	24	= 13 + 11	= 24 + 0
5	Middle verseline of אִם־נִמְלִיתִי שׁוֹלְמֵי רָעָה 4	4	4	
	Part I and middle colon: <b>וְאַחֲלָצָה צוֹרְרֵי רִיקָם</b> 3	3	3	3
	middle words: (60 = 29 + 2 + 29) Total, v. 5	7	= 4 + 3	= 7 + 0
6	וַיִּרְדֵּף אוֹיֵב נַפְשִׁי וַיִּשָּׁג 5	4	4	4
	וַיִּרְמַס לְאַרְצֵי חַיִּי 3	3	3	3
	וַיִּכְבֹּדֵי לְעֶפְרַיִם יוֹשְׁבֵי סֵלָה: 3	3	3	3
	Total, v. 6	10	= 7 + 3	= 10 + 0
	Strophe 2 Total, v. 4-6	26	= 16 + 10	= 26 + 0
	Total, v. 5-6	17	= 11 + 6	= 17 + 0
	Total, v. 2-4	24	= 13 + 11	= 24 + 0
	Numerical chiasmus, v. 2-6	41	= 24 + 17	= 41 + 0
7	קִימָה <b>יְהוָה</b> <sup>3</sup> בְּאַפְּךָ 6	3	3	3
	הַנִּשְׂאָ בְעֵבְרוֹת צוֹרְרֵי־הָ	3	3	3
	וְעוֹרָה אֵלַי מִשְׁפָּט צְוִיָּה: 4	4	4	4
	Total, v. 7	10	= 6 + 4	= 10 + 0
	Total, v. 2-7	51	= 30 + 21	= 51 + 0
8	וַעֲדַת לְאֻמִּים תִּסּוּבְכֶנָּה 7	3	3	3
	וְעֲלִיָּה לְמָרוֹם שׁוֹבָה: 3	3	3	3
	Total, v. 8	6	= 3 + 3	= 6 + 0
	Total, v. 4-8	42	= 25 + 17	= 42 + 0
	Total, v. 2-8	57	= 33 + 24	= 57 + 0
9a	Words spoken about God יְדִין עַמִּים <b>יְהוָה</b> <sup>4</sup> 8	3	3	0 + 3
	Strophe 3 Total, v. 7-9a	19	= 12 + 7	= 19 + 0
	Numerical Total, v. 2-4	24	= 13 + 11	= 24 + 0
	Chiasmus Total, v. 5-9a	36	= 23 + 13	= 36 + 0
	Part I Canto I v. 2-9a	60	= 36 + 24	= 57 + 3
9b	Middle words of poem: שְׁפָטֵי <b>יְהוָה</b> <sup>5</sup> 9	2	2	2
	כְּצִדְקֵי וּכְחַמֵּי עָלַי: 131 = 60 + 11 + 60	3	3	3
10a	Meaningful centre יוֹמְרָנָה רַע רְשָׁעִים 10	4	4	4
10b	Middle verseline ותְּכַוֵּן צְדִיק 9 + 1 + 9	2	2	2
10c	וּבְחֵן לְבוֹת וּכְלִיֹּת 11	3	3	3
10d	אֱלֹהִים צְדִיק: 2	2	2	2
	Total, v. 10	11	= 11 + 0	= 11 + 0
	Strophe 4 Total, v. 9b-10	16	= 13 + 3	= 16 + 0
	Total, v. 2-10	76	= 49 + 27	= 73 + 3

11		מִנְנִי עַל־אֱלֹהִים <sup>^</sup>	12	3	3	3
		מוֹשִׁיעַ יִשְׂרָאֵל לֵב:		3	3	3
		Total, v. 11		6	= 3 + 3	= 0 + 6
		Total, v. 10-11		17	= 14 + 3	= 11 + 6
12		אֱלֹהִים שׁוֹפֵט צְדִיקִים <sup>^</sup>	13	3	3	3
		וְאֵל זַעַם בְּכָל־יּוֹם:		4	4	4
		Total, v. 12		7	= 3 + 4	= 0 + 7
	Strophe 5	Total, v. 11-12		13	= 6 + 7	= 0 + 13
	Canto II	Total, v. 9b-12		29	= 19 + 10	= 16 + 13
13	Pivot of Part II:	אִם־לֹא יָשׁוּב תְּרַבּוּ יִלְטוּשׁ <sup>^</sup>	14	5	5	5
		Words: 71 = 34 + 3 + 34		3	3	3
	Middle verseline and 2 middle cola	Total, v. 13		8	= 5 + 3	= 0 + 8
14		וְלוֹ תִכְיֶין כְּלִי־מָוֶת <sup>^</sup>	15	4	4	4
		חֲצִי לְדִלְקִים יִפְעַל:		3	3	3
		Total, v. 14		7	= 4 + 3	= 0 + 7
	Strophe 6	Total, v. 13-14		15	= 9 + 6	= 0 + 15
		Total, v. 10-14		39	= 26 + 13	= 11 + 28
15		הִנֵּה יִחַבֵּל־אֲוֶן <sup>^</sup>	16	3	3	3
		וְהָרָה עֲמָל וְיִלְד שֶׁקֶר:		4	4	4
		Total, v. 15		7	= 3 + 4	= 0 + 7
16		בּוֹר כָּרָה וַיִּחַפְּרֶהוּ <sup>^</sup>	17	3	3	3
		וַיִּפֹּל בְּשַׁחַת יִפְעַל:		3	3	3
		Total, v. 16		6	= 3 + 3	= 0 + 6
17		יָשׁוּב עֲמָלוֹ כְּרֹאשׁוֹ <sup>^</sup>	18	3	3	3
		וְעַל קִדְקָדוֹ חִמְסוֹ יִרַד:		4	4	4
		Total, v. 17		7	= 3 + 4	= 0 + 7
	Strophe 7	Total, v. 15-17		20	= 9 + 11	= 0 + 20
	Canto III	Total, v. 13-17		35	= 18 + 17	= 0 + 35
		Total, v. 9b-17		64	= 37 + 27	= 16 + 48
		Total, v. 11-17		48	= 24 + 24	= 0 + 48
18	Coda	אֲנִיָּה <sup>6</sup> בְּצַדִּיקִים <sup>^</sup>	19	3	3	3
		וְאֲזַמְרָה שֵׁם־יְהוָה <sup>7</sup> עֲלֵיוֹן:		4	4	4
	Strophe 8	Total, v. 18		7	= 3 + 4	= 0 + 7
		Total, v. 14-18		34	= 16 + 18	= 0 + 34
	Part II	Total, v. 9b-18		71	= 40 + 31	= 16 + 55
	Numerical	Total, v. 11-18		55	= 27 + 28	= 0 + 55
	Chiasmus	Total, v. 2-10		76	= 49 + 27	= 73 + 3
		Total, v. 2-18		131	= 76 + 55	= 73 + 58
		With the heading, v. 1-18		141	= 81 + 60	
		And with סְלָה (1x), v. 1-18		142	= 81 + 61	

## Observations

1. The theory that the psalm, in its present form, is the result of a combination of two originally separate poems, vs. 2-9a and 9b-18, has in recent times been strongly advocated by Pieter van der Lugt. He contends that each section is still a self-contained rhetorical entity. The outcome of the following logotechnical analysis may be interpreted as supporting Van der Lugt's supposition, but I shall argue that it only provides evidence to show that the psalm consists of two distinct parts.

According to Van der Lugt the first section, **Part I**, vs. 2-9a, is made up of 60 words divided into 3 strophes, with 7 verselines and 17 cola:

vs. 2-3 (Strophe 1)	2 verselines	4 cola		<b>15</b> words
vs. 4-6 (Strophe 2)	3 verselines	7 cola		<b>26</b> words
vs. 7-9a (Strophe 3)	2 verselines	6 cola		<b>19</b> words
<hr/>				
Total vs. 2-9a	7 verselines	17 cola	<b>26</b> + <b>34</b>	= 60 words.

The logotechnical analysis underscores the structural unity of this section as a 'self-contained rhetorical entity', as Van der Lugt calls it. The *selah* after v. 6 delimits the middle strophe, which is surrounded by **34** (2 x **17**) words, and can be regarded as the core of Part I. It is throughout phrased as addressed to God, but unexpectedly concluded by words spoken *about* God, v. 9a, marking the end of the first section:

יְהוָה יִדְּיִן עַמִּים 'YHWH judges the peoples'.

The unity of Part I is buttressed by another compositional device: the numerical chiasmus, which is employed twice, first, to fuse vs. 2-6 into a structural unity:

vs. 2-4	<b>24</b> = 13a + 11b
vs. 5-6	<b>17</b> = 11a + 6b
vs. 2-6	<b>41</b> = 24a + 17b

and second, to forge the whole first section into a single unit:

vs. 2-4	<b>24</b> = 13a + 11b
vs. 5-9a	<b>36</b> = 23a + 13b
vs. 2-9a	<b>60</b> = 36a + 24b.

So we may conclude that this section is a 'self-contained entity', but in my opinion, it is better to call it a 'distinct sub-section' of the psalm.

2. The second section, **Part II**, vs. 9b-18, starts with 16 words addressed to God (vs. 9b-10, Column c), but vs. 11-18 is phrased as spoken *about* God (Column d). This part of the psalm has a structure of its own: the 71 words divide into 5 strophes with 11 verselines and 22 cola.

The pivotal verseline of Part II, v. 13, contains the two middle cola, of which the second colon, v. 13b, coincides precisely with the arithmetic centre on word level. The 71 words divide into **34** + **3** + **34**. This 3-word centre, significantly flanked by **34** words, constitutes the meaningful centre of this section:

קָשְׁתוֹ דָּרָךְ וַיְכַוְנֶנָּה 'he strings his bow and makes it ready'.

These observations do indeed support Van der Lugt's supposition that the two sections are self-contained entities. However, they cannot be considered evidence showing that we have to do with two originally independent poems. In my view, the evidence only shows that Psalm 7 consists of two distinct sub-sections.

3. A closer examination of the psalm as a whole provides evidence substantiating its structural unity. To begin with, the psalm has its own unmistakable meaningful centre on word level, the **11** words in **vs. 9b-10a-b** ( $131 = 60 + 11 + 60$ ), highlighted by the pivotal word in v. 10a, **יִגְמַר**, 'let it come to an end' ( $11 = 5 + \boxed{1} + 5$ ):

שְׁפֹטֵנִי יְהוָה כְּצַדִּיק וּבְתָמִי עָלַי: יִגְמַר־נָא רַע רְשָׁעִים וּתְכוּנֵן צַדִּיק

Judge me, YHWH, according to my righteousness and the innocence within me!  
O let the evil of the wicked **come to an end**, and grant support to the righteous!

This is a most eloquent expression of the quintessence of the psalm: a call on God to judge the supplicant according to his righteousness and to let the evil of the wicked come to an end.

4. The unity of the poem as a whole is significantly underscored by a numerical chiasmus which binds two parts of the text together: **vs. 2-10** with their **76** words addressed to God (*including* the **3** words spoken about God in v. 9a!), and **vs. 11-18** with their **55** words spoken about God:

vs. 2-10	<b>76 = 49a + 27b</b>	2 <sup>nd</sup> person form
vs. 11-18	<b>55 = 27a + 28b</b>	3 <sup>rd</sup> person form
vs. 2-18	<b>131 = 76a + 55b.</b>	

The numbers **76** and **55** correspond precisely with the number of words before and after atnach in the entire poem. As I have explained in the General Introduction, under "Special patterns", in such a case these numbers form a *numerical chiasmus*, a compositional technique which ties a text together and reinforces its unity.

Since v. 18 stands out in terms of content, I regard it as a coda. For the coda, see the General Introduction, "The use of a coda as a device for conclusion".

Additionally, the **7** occurrences of the name YHWH also accentuates the unity of the text. The 4<sup>th</sup> (middle) occurrence falls precisely within the 3 words spoken *about* God in v. 9a, which prelude the meaningful centre. For the devices used to highlight the meaningful centre of the text, see the General Introduction, "The centre of the text", more particularly "Special devices to highlight the meaningful centre".

To sum up: although two distinct sub-sections can be identified and differentiated, there is no doubt that the psalm, as it stands in MT, is a single, meticulously designed numerical composition. It falls in the same category as [Psalm 40](#), which is likewise a composite poem. The two psalms, [Psalm 9-10](#) and [Psalm 42-43](#), on the other hand, regarded by the Masoretes as four poems, are both designed as single compositions.

5. The divine name numbers feature throughout the text in the following way:

vs. 4-6	<b>26</b> words in total
vs. 5-6	<b>17</b> words in total
vs. 2-6	<b>17</b> words after atnach
vs. 2-7	<b>51</b> (3 x <b>17</b> ) words in total
vs. 4-8	<b>17</b> words after atnach
vs. 10-11	<b>17</b> words in total
vs. 10-14	<b>39</b> words: <b>26</b> before, and <b>13</b> after atnach (YHWH <i>echad!</i> )
vs. 13-17	<b>17</b> words after atnach
vs. 14-18	<b>34</b> (2 x <b>17</b> ) words in total.

6. The designation אֱלֹהִים occurs 5 times and אֵל once. The explicit use of the word שֵׁם, 'name' (of YHWH), in v. 18 precludes the glorification of the *name* in Psalm 8, (vs. 2 and 10), and echoes yet further on in Psalm 9 (vs. 3 and 11): there are no less than 5 occurrences of this keyword in the three successive psalms!

The same can be said of the important keyword עֲלִיּוֹן, 'Most High', occurring in v. 18, which reverberates in Ps. 9: 3. Consult Observation 6 in my Analysis of Psalm 9-10.

7. Significantly enough, the name יְהוָה echoes through exactly **26** instances in Pss. 6-9, starting as the very first word in Psalm 6:

- 8** instances in the relatively short Psalm 6
- 7** instances in Psalm 7, altogether **15** (= YH)
- 2** instances in Psalm 8, altogether **17** in Psalms 6-8
- 9** instances in Psalm 9, together **11** (= WH),
- 26** instances altogether in Psalms 6-9.

It is intriguing to note that, together with the **21** occurrences in Psalms 1-5 and the **5** in Psalm 10, the grand total for Psalms 1-10 amount to exactly **52** (2 x 26).

This is a clear indication of the calculated way in which the name יְהוָה was woven into the text of the psalms to signify the presence of God, in addition to the divine name numbers. For an overview, see the General Introduction under "The name YHWH woven into the fabric of the text", as well as the Introduction to Book I, Table I and the Observations there.

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