

# Psalm 14— 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 14

- This psalm is the first clear example of a poem in Book I having a menorah pattern: in this case it coincides with the 7 Masoretic verses.
- As in Psalms 1, 5 and 6, syntax is used in addition to the *atnach* to define the numerical structure and to weave divine name numbers into the fabric of the text.

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

- Van der Lugt and Labuschagne: 1, 2 || 3-4, 5-6 || 7 (3 cantos and 5 strophes with 10 verselines and 22 cola).
- Fokkelman: 1-2, 3-4 || 5-6, 7 (2 stanzas and 4 strophes with 8 verselines and 18 cola, taking vs. 1-2 as one strophe with two tricollic verselines, and v. 3 as a bicolic verseline).
- For an overview of other divisions of the text, see Van der Lugt, CAS, Psalm 14, § 6.

## Logotechnical analysis

- Columns **a** and **b** show the number of words before and after the *atnach*.
- Column **c**: words in the main clauses; **d**: words in the subordinate clauses.
- The numbering of the verselines is shown in **brown**.

		Total	a	b	c	d
1	לְמִנְצַח לְדָוִד Heading:	2	2			
	אָמַר נָבֵל בְּלִבּוֹ 1	3	3		3	
	אֵין אֱלֹהִים^	2	2		2	
	הִשְׁחִיתוּ הַתְּעִיבוּ עָלֶיךָ 2	3		3	3	
	אֵין עֲשֵׂה-טוֹב:	3		3	3	
	<b>Strophe 1</b> Total, v. 1	11	= 5	+ 6	= 11	+ 0
2	יְהִי מִשְׁמוֹם הַשִּׁקְוָה 3	3	3		3	
	עַל-בְּנֵי-אָדָם	3	3		3	
	לְרֹאוֹת הַיָּשׁ מִשְׁכִּיל^ 4	3	3			3
	הִרְשֵׁ אֶת-אֱלֹהִים:	3		3		3
	<b>Strophe 2</b> Total, v. 2	12	= 9	+ 3	= 6	+ 6
	<b>Canto I</b> Total, v. 1-2	23	= 14	+ 9	= 17	+ 6

3	הַכֹּל סָר יַחְדָּו נֶאֱלָחוּ אֵין עֲשֵׂה־טוֹב אֵין גַּם־אָחַד: Total, v. 3 Total, v. 2-3	5	4	4	4	
			3	3	3	
			3	3	3	
			<hr/>			
			10	= 7	+ 3	= 10 + 0
			22	= 16	+ 6	= 16 + 6
4	Five middle words: הָלֹא יָדְעוּ כָּל־פְּעָלֵי אֲוֹן (71 = 33 + 5 + 33) אֲכָלֵי עַמִּי אָכְלוּ לֶחֶם יְהוָה לֹא קָרְאוּ: Total, v. 4 Strophe 3 (middle) Total, v. 3-4 Total, v. 2-4	6	5	5	5	
			4	4	4	
			3	3	3	
			<hr/>			
			12	= 9	+ 3	= 12 + 0
			22	= 16	+ 6	= 22 + 0
			34	= 25	+ 9	= 28 + 6
5	שָׁם פָּתְחוּ פִּתְחָם כִּי־אֱלֹהִים בְּדוֹר צַדִּיק: Total, v. 5 Total, v. 1-5	7	3	3	3	
			4	4	4	
			<hr/>			
			7	= 3	+ 4	= 3 + 4
			52	= 33	= 19	= 42 + 0
6	עֲצַת־עֲנִי תְּבִישׁוּ כִּי יְהוָה מִחֶסְדוֹ: Total, v. 6 Strophe 4 Total, v. 5-6 Canto II Total, v. 3-6 Total, v. 2-6	8	3	3	3	
			3	3	3	
			<hr/>			
			6	= 3	+ 3	= 3 + 3
			13	= 6	+ 7	= 6 + 7
			35	= 22	+ 13	= 28 + 7
			47	= 31	+ 16	= 34 + 13
7	מִי יִתֵּן מִצִּיּוֹן יִשְׁעַת יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּשׁוּב יְהוָה שְׁבוֹת עַמּוֹ יִגַּל יַעֲקֹב יִשְׁמַח יִשְׂרָאֵל: Canto III Strophe 5 Total, v. 7 Total, v. 5-7 Total, v. 3-7 Total, v. 1-7 With the heading, v. 1-7	9	3	3	3	
			2	2	2	
			4	4	4	
			4	4	4	
			<hr/>			
			13	= 9	+ 4	= 9 + 4
			26	= 15	+ 11	= 15 + 11
			48	= 31	+ 17	= 37 + 11
			71	= 45	+ 26	= 54 + 17
			73	= 47	+ 26	

## Observations

- In terms of the 71 words of the poem, the arithmetic centre is constituted by the five words in vs. 4a,  $71 = 33 + 5 + 33$ , which can be considered as its meaningful centre:

הָלֹא יָדְעוּ כָּל־פְּעָלֵי אֲוֹן Have they no knowledge, all those evildoers?

The centre is situated right in the middle of the poetic structure of the 22 cola, as if the poem were an alphabetic acrostic: in the 12<sup>th</sup> colon. See the General Introduction, under "The Alphabetic acrostics". This strengthens the pivotal position of the meaningful centre. Additionally, the meaningful centre is situated in the central verseline of the 7 Masoretic verses, which form a menorah pattern with the entire v. 4 at the centre:

הָלֹא יָדְעוּ כָּל־פְּעָלֵי אֲוֹן אֲכָלֵי עַמִּי אָכְלוּ לֶחֶם יְהוָה לֹא קָרְאוּ:

Have they no knowledge, all those evildoers // who devour my people as if eating bread  
And never call upon YHWH?

For the menorah pattern, see the General Introduction, under "Special patterns".

2. The author used two devices to structure the text in order to weave divine name numbers into the text: syntax and the *atnach*. In terms of syntax, the text divides into 54 words in the main clauses (Column c) and **17** in the subordinate clauses (Column d). Compare Psalms 1, 5, and 6. In terms of the division of the text by *atnach*, we find 45 words before and **26** after *atnach*.
3. Counting the words describing the actions of human beings we find **11** words in v. 1, **22** in vs. 3-4, and **4** in v. 7d, altogether **37**, and the words devoted to actions caused by God (**12** in v. 2 and **22** in vs. 5-7c), the total number amounts to **34** (2 x **17**). What meets the eye immediately is the use of **11**, the number of fulfilment and completeness, particularly given the **22** cola, the **33** words on either side of the arithmetic middle and the other occurrences of **11** or multiples of it in the chart. In connection with the **33** (**11 + 22**) words devoted to the actions of human beings Van der Lugt remarks: "I would tentatively suggest that in vv. 1 and 3-4 the poet has expressed the *absolute* corruption of the godless in a quantitative way." This also holds true of the **22** words in vs. 5-7c describing the situation caused by the presence and protection of God.
4. The divine name numbers feature in several instances in the text. Very significant are the two identical compositional formulas in vs. 5-7: the **26** words divide into the two components of the name YHWH: **15** (YH) words before and **11** (WH) after *atnach*, and in **15** words in the main clauses and **11** in the subordinate clauses. This reminds us of Psalms 1, 2 and 5. See Observation 4 in my Analysis of Psalm 1.

vs. 1-2	<b>17</b> words in the main clauses
vs. 2-4	<b>34</b> (2 x <b>17</b> ) words in total
vs. 1-5	<b>52</b> (2 x <b>26</b> ) words in total
vs. 2-6	<b>34</b> (2 x <b>17</b> ) words in the main clauses
vs. 5-7	<b>26</b> ( <b>15 + 11</b> ) words in two categories
vs. 3-7	<b>17</b> words after <i>atnach</i>
vs. 1-7	<b>26</b> words after <i>atnach</i>
vs. 1-7	<b>17</b> words in the subordinate clauses.

5. The name יהוה occurs 4 times (2a, 4c, 6b, and 7c) and together with the 3 occurrences of אלהים (1b, 2d, and 5b) there are **7** references to God. The **4** occurrences of the divine name, together with the **13** instances in Psalms 11-13, bring the total for Psalms 11-14 to **17**. See the General Introduction, under "The name YHWH woven into the fabric of the text", and the Introduction to Book I, Table I.
6. For the differences between Psalm 14 and its counterpart in Book II, see my Analysis of [Psalm 53](#).

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