

# Psalm 25— 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](#)".

## Special feature of Psalm 25

- This psalm is a well-nigh perfect alphabetic acrostic in which several devices have been employed to highlight the meaningful centre of the text, which is to be found on both word- and colon level, in the *lamedh*-verseline. Moreover, the centre is clearly marked by the sudden change from words spoken *about* God to words spoken *to* him.
- The change in the direction of address defines the strophic structure to a great extent.

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

- Van der Lugt: 1-3, 4-5, 6-7 | 8-9, 10-11 || 12-13, 14-15 | 16-17, 18-19, 20-21 || 22 (3 cantos with 11 strophes, 21 verselines and 45 cola, taking vs. 1-2 as a tricolonic verseline).
- Fokkelman: 1-3, 4-5 || 6-7, 8-9 || 10-11, 12-13, 14-15 || 16-17, 18-19 || 20-21, 22 (5 stanzas with 11 strophes, 23 verselines and 47 cola, taking vs. 1 and 7a as bicola, and v. 1 through the first word of v. 2 as the first verseline).
- Labuschagne: 1-3, 4-5, 6-7 || 8-9, 10-11 | 12-13, 14-15 || 16-17, 18-19, 20-22 (3 cantos with 11 strophes, 21 verselines and 45 cola, including the coda, v. 22, in the last canto).
- For an overview of other divisions of the text, see Van der Lugt, CAS, Psalm 25, § 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	לְדָוִד	Heading	1	1			
	אֱלֹהֵי יְהוָה נִפְשִׁי אֶשָּׂא:	א 1	4	4		4	
2*	אֱלֹהֵי בָּךְ בְּטַחַתִּי אֶל־אֲבוֹשָׁתִי	ב	5	5		5	
	אֶל־יַעֲלֶצֶוּ אֵיבֵי לִי:		4		4	4	
	Total, v. 1-2		13	= 9	+ 4	= 13	+ 0
3	גַּם כָּל־קוֹיֶיךָ לֹא יִבְשׁוּ	ג 2	5	5		5	
	יִבְשׁוּ תַבּוּגֵיךָ רִיקָם:		3		3	3	
	Total, v. 3		8	= 5	+ 3	= 8	+ 0
	Total, v. 2-3		17	= 10	+ 7	= 17	+ 0
	<b>Strophe 1</b> Total, v. 1-3		21	= 14	+ 7	= 21	+ 0
4	דְּרָכֶיךָ יְהוָה הוֹדִיעֵנִי	ד 3	3	3		3	
	אֶרְחוּתֶיךָ לְמַדְנִי:		2		2	2	
	Total, v. 4		5	= 3	+ 2	= 5	+ 0
	Total, v. 1-4		26	= 17	+ 9	= 26	+ 0
5*	הִדְרִיכֵנִי בְּאַמְתָּךְ וְלִמְדֵנִי	ה 4	3	3		3	
	כִּי־אַתָּה אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל		4	4		4	
	וְאוֹתָךְ קִוִּיתִי כָּל־הַיּוֹם:	ו	4		4	4	
	Total, v. 5		11	= 7	+ 4	= 11	+ 0
	<b>Strophe 2</b> Total, v. 4-5		16	= 10	+ 6	= 16	+ 0

6	זכר־רחמיֶךָ יְהוָה וַחֲסִדֶיֶךָ כִּי מַעֲוֹלָם הִמָּחָה: Total, v. 6	ז 5	4	4	4	
			3		3	3
			<hr/>			
			7	=	4	+ 3 = 7 + 0
7	חַטָּאוֹת נַעֲוִירִי וּפְשָׁעֵי אֶל־תִּזְכֹּר כְּחִסְדֶּיֶךָ זָכַר־לִי־אֶתְהָא לְמַעַן טוֹבֶיךָ יְהוָה: Total, v. 7	ח 6	5	5	5	
			4		4	
			3		3	3
			<hr/>			
			12	=	9	+ 3 = 12 + 0
	Strophe 3 Total, v. 6-7		19	=	13	+ 6 = 19 + 0
	Canto I Total, v. 1-7		56	=	37	+ 19 = 56 + 0
8	טוֹב־וַיִּשָּׁר יְהוָה עַל־כֵּן יוֹרֶה חַטָּאִים בְּדַרְךְ: Total, v. 8	ט 7	3	3		3
			5		5	5
			<hr/>			
			8	=	3	+ 5 = 0 + 8
9	יִדְרֹךְ עֲנוּיִם בַּמִּשְׁפָּט וַיִּלְמַד עֲנוּיִם דְּרָבּוֹ: Total, v. 9	י 8	3	3		3
			3		3	3
			<hr/>			
			6	=	3	+ 3 = 0 + 6
	Strophe 4 Total, v. 8-9		14	=	6	+ 8 = 0 + 14
10	כָּל־אֲרָחוֹת יְהוָה חֶסֶד וְאֱמֻנָה לְנַצְרֵי בְרִיתוֹ וְעַד־תִּיּוֹ: Total, v. 10	כ 9	5	5		5
			3		3	3
			<hr/>			
			8	=	5	+ 3 = 0 + 8
	Total, v. 1-10		78	=	48	+ 30 = 56 + 22
11	Middle words: <span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">לְמַעַן־שָׁמַךְ יְהוָה</span> וְסִלַּחְתָּ לְעוֹנֵי כִּי רַב־הוּא: <span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">2</span> + 78 Middle colon: 22 + 1 + 22 Total, v. 11	ל 10	3	3		3
			5		5	5
			<hr/>			
			8	=	3	+ 5 = 8 + 0
	Strophe 5 Total, v. 10-11		16	=	8	+ 8 = 8 + 8
	Canticle II.1 Total, v. 8-11		30	=	14	+ 16 = 8 + 22
	Total, v. 1-11		86	=	51	+ 35 = 64 + 22
12	מִי־זֶה הָאִישׁ יִרְאֵה יְהוָה יִוְרְנוּ בְּדַרְךְ יִבְחָר: Total, v. 12	מ 11	5	5		5
			3		3	3
			<hr/>			
			8	=	5	+ 3 = 0 + 8
13	נִפְשׁוּ בְטוֹב תְּלִינֵי וְזָרְעוּ יִירֶשׁ אֶרֶץ: Total, v. 13	נ 12	3	3		3
			3		3	3
			<hr/>			
			6	=	3	+ 3 = 0 + 6
	Strophe 6 Total, v. 12-13		14	=	8	+ 6 = 0 + 14
14	סוֹד יְהוָה לִירְאָיו וּבְרִיתוֹ לְהוֹדִיעֵם: Total, v. 14	ס 13	3	3		3
			2		2	2
			<hr/>			
			5	=	3	+ 2 = 0 + 5
15	עֵינֵי תַמִּיד אֶל־יְהוָה כִּי הוּא־יוֹצִיא מִרְשַׁת רַגְלֵי: Total, v. 15	ע 14	4	4		4
			5		5	5
			<hr/>			
			9	=	4	+ 5 = 0 + 9
	Strophe 7 Total, v. 14-15		14	=	7	+ 7 = 0 + 14
	Canticle II.2 Total, v. 12-15		28	=	15	+ 13 = 0 + 28
	Canto II Total, v. 8-15		58	=	29	+ 29 = 8 + 50

16	פְּנֵה־אֱלֹהִים וְחַנּוּנִי כִּי־יִחַד וְעֵנִי אָנֹכִי: Total, v. 16	פ 15	3 3 3 4 4 4 <hr/> 7 = 3 + 4 = 7 + 0
17	צָרוֹת לִבִּי הִרְחִיבוּ מִמְצוֹקוֹתַי הוֹצִיאֵנִי: Total, v. 17	צ 16 ק	3 3 3 2 2 2 <hr/> 5 = 3 + 2 = 5 + 0 12 = 6 + 6 = 12 + 0
<b>Strophe 8 Total, v. 16-17</b>			
18	רְאֵה עֵנִי וְעַמְלִי וְשֵׂא לְכָל־חַטָּאוֹתַי: Total, v. 18	ר 17	3 3 3 3 3 3 <hr/> 6 = 3 + 3 = 6 + 0
19	רְאֵה־אוֹיְבֵי כִי־רְבוּ וְשִׁנְאַת חָמַס שִׁנְאוֹנִי: Total, v. 19	ר 18	4 4 4 3 3 3 <hr/> 7 = 4 + 3 = 7 + 0 13 = 7 + 6 = 13 + 0
<b>Strophe 9 Total, v. 18-19</b>			
20	שְׁמְרָה נַפְשִׁי וְהַצִּילֵנִי אֶל־אֲבוֹשׁ כִּי־חָסִיתִי בָךְ: Total, v. 20	ש 19	3 3 3 5 5 5 <hr/> 8 = 3 + 5 = 8 + 0
21*	תִּם־וַיִּשְׂרַח וַיִּצְרוּנִי כִּי קוֹיִתִּיךָ יְהוָה: (LXX) Total, v. 21	ת 20	3 3 3 2/3 2/3 2/3 <hr/> 5/6 = 3 + 2/3 = 5/6 + 0 13/14 = 6 + 7/8 = 13/14 + 0 66/67 = 34 + 32/33 = 38/39 + 28
<b>Strophe 10 Total, v. 20-21</b>			
Total, v. 12-21			
22 Coda	פָּדֵה אֱלֹהִים אֶת־יִשְׂרָאֵל מִכַּף צָרוֹתָיו: Strophe 11 Total, v. 22 Total, v. 19-22 Canto III Total, v. 16-22 Total, v. 11-22 Total, v. 1-22 With the heading, v. 1-22	21	4 4 4 2 2 2 <hr/> 6 = 4 + 2 = 6 + 0 26/27 = 14 + 12/13 = 26/27 + 0 44/45 = 23 + 21/22 = 44/45 + 0 80/81 = 41 + 39/40 = 52/53 + 28 158/159 = 89 + 69/70 = 108/109 + 50 159/160 = 90 + 69/70

**V. 2a\*** In order to restore the initial *beth*-verseline, scholars have suggested transferring the first word of v. 2, אֱלֹהֵי, to the end of v. 1 (see *BHS*). However, the text is in order as it stands in MT, as Van der Lugt has argued (*CAS*, § 25.7), who rightly takes vs. 1-2 as a tricollic verseline. The acrostic is far from perfect, seeing the quasi *beth*-line within the *aleph*-verseline, the *waw*-line within the *heh*-verseline and the position of the *qoph* in v. 17b.

**V. 21b\*** The LXX supplies *yhwh* as subject of the verb – see below Observation 4.

## Observations

1. In terms of the 158 words of MT, the arithmetic centre falls on the 2 words in v. 11a:

לְמַעַן־שְׁמֶךָ For your name's sake.

The two pivotal words are significantly flanked by 78 (3 x 26) words: 158 = 78 + 2 + 78, and may be regarded as the meaningful centre on word level. If we supply the presumed missing subject יְהוָה in v. 21b (see below Observation 4), the arithmetic middle would then be the 3 words in v. 11a, which would constitute a more perfect meaningful centre on word level (159 = 78 + 3 + 78):

לְמַעַן־שְׁמֶךָ יְהוָה, For your name's sake, YHWH.

In terms of the 45 cola, an alternative meaningful centre is to be found in v. 11b, the middle colon (45 = 22 + 1 + 22), which expresses the gist of the prayer (compare Psalm 23 for a similar situation):

וְסַלַחְתָּ לְעוֹנֵי כִּי רַב־הוּא \* Forgive my iniquity, for it is great.\*

More importantly, it falls precisely within the *lamedh*-verseline, v. 11, the second of the two middle verselines. Consult the General Introduction, "The alphabetic acrostics".

לְמַעַן־שִׁמְךָ יְהוָה ^ וְסַלַחְתָּ לְעוֹנֵי כִּי רַב־הוּא,

For your name's sake, YHWH // forgive my iniquity, for it is great.

The pivotal position of the *lamedh*-verseline is significantly highlighted by the fact that it is flanked on either side by passages in which the poet speaks *about* God. See the General Introduction, "Special devices to highlight the meaningful centre". Therefore, because it stands out in such a special way, it is very likely that it was consciously designed as the larger meaningful centre. In terms of words, it is slightly off-centre (78 + 8 + 72).

The change in the direction of address divides the text in the following fashion:

vs. 1-7	Words directly addressed to God	56 words
vs. 8-10	Words spoken about God	22 words
<b>v. 11</b>	<b>Words directly addressed to God</b>	<b>8 words</b>
vs. 12-15	Words spoken about God	28 words
vs. 16-22	Words directly addressed to God	44 words.

- As in the preceding psalms, the poem is concluded by a coda, which falls, in my view (contra Van der Lugt), within the last canto – see the General Introduction, "The use of a coda as a device for conclusion".
- The divine name numbers are woven into the text in the following way:

vs. 2-3	17 words in total
vs. 1-4	26 words in total, with 17 before atnach
vs. 1-10	78 (3 x 26) words in total before the meaningful centre
vs. 1-11	51 (3 x 17) words before atnach
vs. 11-18	26 words in 2 <sup>nd</sup> person form (Column c)
vs. 12-21	34 (2 x 17) words before atnach
vs. 19-22	26 words in total (MT)
vs. 12-22	34 (2 x 17) words after atnach (MT)
vs. 11-22	52 (2 x 26) words in Column c (MT).

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\* It is intriguing to note that the pivotal colon has 17 letters. If this was deliberately designed, it may explain the *waw* at the beginning, which may be taken (with Dahood) as a *waw emphaticum*.

4. The name יהוה occurs 10x (vs. 1, 4a, 6a, 7c, 8a, 10a, 11a, 12a, 14a, 15a ), אלהים 2x (5b and 22a), and אלהי 1x (2a). Following LXX (see *BHS*), the insertion of *yhwh* in v. 21b would raise the occurrences of the divine name to **11**. At the same time, this would result in a perfect meaningful centre on word level ( $159 = 78 + 3 + 78$ ). Therefore, there is much to say for inserting *yhwh* (cf. Van der Lugt, *CAS*, pp. 263 and 267), were it not that the extra word would cause the loss of several divine name numbers at the end of the psalm. Moreover, it would be in tension with MT's carefully achieved **272** ( $16 \times 17$ ) occurrences of the name YHWH in Book I. See the [Introduction to Book I](#), Table I and the Observations. For a comparable situation, see [Psalm 27](#); consult there my remark at the bottom of the chart.

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