

Psalm 27— 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 27

- Psalm 27 contains no less than 13 occurrences of the name YHWH but relatively few divine name numbers 17 and 26.
- The 14 Masoretic verses differ significantly from the 22 poetic verselines, especially in the first part of the psalm (vs. 1-6), which is phrased as words spoken *about* God. This strongly suggests a bipartite structure, which is to a great extent determined by words spoken *about* God and words directly addressed to him.

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

- Van der Lugt: 1, 2, 3 || 4, 5, 6 || 7-9c, 9d-10, 11-12 || 13-14 (4 cantos with 10 strophes, 22 verselines and 49 cola).
- Fokkelman: 1, 2, 3 || 4, 5, 6 || 7-9a, 9b-10, 11-12 || 13-14 (4 stanzas with 10 strophes, 23 verselines and 50 cola, taking vs. 7-9 as 5 bicolic verselines, and v. 13 as a bicolon).
- Labuschagne: 1, 2, 3 | 4, 5, 6 || 7-9, 10 | 11-12, 13, 14 (2 cantos with 2 canticles each, 11 strophes, 22 verselines and 49 cola, taking into account the direction of address as well as the coda in v. 14).
- For an overview of other divisions of the text, see Van der Lugt, *CAS*, Psalm 27, § 6.

Logotechnical analysis

- Columns **a** and **b** show the number of words before and after the atnach.
- Column **c**: words spoken about God; **d**: words directly addressed to God.
- The numbering of the verselines is shown in **brown**.

		Total	a	b	c	d
1	לְדָוִד הִדְבָּר	1	1			
	יְהוָה אֹרֵי וַיִּשְׁעֵי	1	3	3	3	
	מִמֵּי אֵירָאֵה	2	2		2	
	יְהוָה מִעֲוֹתַי	2	3	3	3	
	מִמֵּי אֶפְקֹד:	2	2	2	2	
	Strophe 1 Total, v. 1	10	= 5	+ 5	= 10	+ 0
2	בְּקִרְבִּי עָלִי מְרַעִים	3	3	3	3	
	לֶאֱכֹל אֶת־בְּשָׂרִי	3	3		3	
	צָרִי וְאִיבֵי לִי	4	3		3	
	הִמָּה כְּשָׁלוֹ וְנִפְלֹו:	3		3	3	
	Strophe 2 Total, v. 2	12	= 9	+ 3	= 12	+ 0
3	אִם־תִּחַנֶּה עָלַי מַחֲנֶה	5	4	4	4	
	לֹא־יִירָא לְבִי	3	3		3	
	אִם־תִּקְוֶם עָלַי מִלְחָמָה	6	4	4	4	
	בְּזֹאת אֲנִי בֹטֵחַ	3		3	3	
	Strophe 3 Total, v. 3	14	= 11	+ 3	= 14	+ 0
	Total, v. 2-3	26	= 20	+ 6	= 26	+ 0
	Canticle I.1 Total, v. 1-3	36	= 25	+ 11	= 36	+ 0

4	7	אחת שאלתי מאת יְהוָה	4	4	4	
		אוֹתָהּ אֲבַקֵּשׁ	2	2	2	
	8	שִׁבְתִּי בְּבֵית יְהוָה	3	3	3	
		כָּל־יְמֵי חַיֵּי	3	3	3	
	9	לְחַזוֹת בְּנֹעַם יְהוָה	3		3	3
		וּלְבַקֵּר בְּהִיכָלוֹ:	2		2	2
		Strophe 4 Total, v. 4	17	= 12 + 5	= 17 + 0	
5	10	כִּי יִצְפְּנֵנִי בְּסֹכֶה	3	3	3	
		בְּיוֹם רָעָה	2	2	2	
	11	יִסְתַּרְנִי בְּסֹתֵר אֶהְלֹוֹ	3	3	3	
		בְּצֹר יְרוֹמְמֵנִי:	2		2	2
		Strophe 5 Total, v. 5	10	= 8 + 2	= 10 + 0	
6	12	וְעָתָה יְרוֹם רֹאשִׁי	3	3	3	
		עַל אֵיבֵי סְבִיבוֹתַי	3	3	3	
	13	וְאֶזְבַּחַת בְּאֶהְלוֹ זִבְחֵי תְרוּעָה	4	4	4	
		אֲשֶׁרָה וְאֶמְרָה לַיהוָה:	3		3	3
		49 = 24 + 1 + 24				
		Middle words: 149=73+3+73				
		Strophe 6, v. 6	13	= 10 + 3	= 13 + 0	
		Total, v. 5-6	23	= 18 + 5	= 23 + 0	
		Canticle I.2 Total, v. 4-6	40	= 30 + 10	= 40 + 0	
		Canto I Total, v. 1-6	76	= 55 + 21	= 76 + 0	
7	14	שָׁמַעַתְּ יְהוָה קוֹלִי אֶקְרָא	4	4	4	
		וְחַגְנִי וְעַגְנִי:	2	2	2	
		Total, v. 7	6	= 6 + 0	= 0 + 6	
8	15	לֵךְ אָמַר לִבִּי בִקְשׁוּ פָנָי	5	5	5	
		אֶת־פָּנֶיךָ יְהוָה אֲבַקֵּשׁ:	4		4	4
		Total, v. 8	9	= 5 + 4	= 0 + 9	
9	16	אֶל־תִּסְתַּר פָּנֶיךָ מִמֶּנִּי	4	4	4	
		אֶל־תִּטֹּב־בְּאֵף עִבְדֶּךָ	4	4	4	
		עֲזַרְתִּי חַיִּיתָ	2	2	2	
	17	אֶל־תִּטְשֵׁנִי וְאֶל־תִּעֲזֹבֵנִי	4		4	4
		אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל:	2		2	2
		Total, v. 9	16	= 10 + 6	= 0 + 16	
		Strophe 7 Total, v. 7-9	31	= 21 + 10	= 0 + 31	
10	18	כִּי־אָבִי וְאִמִּי עֲזֹבוּנִי	4	4	4	
		וַיְהִי יְהוָה יֹאסֵפֵנִי:	2		2	2
		Strophe 8 Total, v. 10	6	= 4 + 2	= 6 + 0	
		Canticle II.1 Total, v. 7-10	37	= 25 + 12	= 6 + 31	

11	הוֹרְנֵי יְהוָה דְּרָבְדָּה	19	3	3	3
	וְנַחְנֵי בְּאַרְחַ מִישׁוּר־אֶ		3	3	3
	לְמַעַן שׁוֹרְרֵי:		2	2	2
	Total, v. 11		8	= 6 + 2	= 0 + 8
12*	אֶל־תִּתְּנֵנִי יְהוָה בְּנִפְשׁ צָרִי־אֵ	20	4/5	4/5	4/5
	כִּי קָמוּ־בִי עֲדֵי־שֹׁקֵר		5	5	5
	וַיִּפַּח הַמָּס:		2	2	2
	Total, v. 12		11/12	= 4/5 + 7	= 0 + 11/12
	Strophe 9 Total, v. 11-12		19/20	= 10/11 + 9	= 0 + 19/20
	Total, v. 10-12		25/26	= 14/15 + 11	= 0 + 25/26
	Total, v. 7-12		56/57	= 35/36 + 21	= 6 + 50/51
13	וְלֹא הֶאֱמַנְתִּי	21	2	2	2
	לְרֵאוֹת בְּטוֹב־יְהוָה		3	3	3
	בְּאַרְץ חַיִּים:		2	2	2
	Strophe 10 Total, v. 13		7	= 7 + 0	= 7 + 0
14	קָוָה אֶל־יְהוָה	22	3	3	3
	חֹזֵק וַיֵּאֱמֹן לְבָדָּה־אֵ		3	3	3
	וַקְוָה אֶל־יְהוָה:		3	3	3
	Coda Strophe 11 Total, v. 14		9	= 6 + 3	= 9 + 0
	Canticle II.2 Total, v. 11-14		35/36	= 23/24 + 12	= 16 + 19/20
	Canto II Total, v. 7-14		72/73	= 38/39 + 24	= 22 + 50/51
	Total, v. 1-14		148/149	= 103/104 + 45	= 98 + 50/51
	With the heading, v. 1-14		149/150	= 104/105 + 45	

* Although numerical considerations are not decisive, they suggest the insertion of יְהוָה after the second word in v. 12a, for which there is evidence on the part of Jerome (see *BHS*). The word-count of the emended text is highlighted. It has 149 words, with 104 (4 x 26) before atnach. The compositional formula of vs. 10-12 is now 26 = 15a + 11b, the numerical value of the name YHWH reflecting its two components (YH = 15 + WH = 11) – see Observation 4 in my Analysis of [Psalm 1](#). Moreover, the number of words addressed to God in vs. 7-12 now amount to 51 (3 x 17).

However, the problem is that the insertion of יְהוָה will have an adverse effect on the number of the occurrences of the divine name in Book I, where I counted exactly 272 (16 x 17) instances. See the Introduction to Book I, Table I. If this specific number of instances was intended by the editor of the Psalter, one or more extra instances would pose a problem, which cannot be resolved at this stage. For the time being, in Psalm 27, I opt for the word-count based on the emended text. In Psalm 25, I refrained from inserting יְהוָה in v. 21, not wanting to disturb the 272 occurrences of the name in Book I. See Observation 4 in my Analysis of [Psalm 25](#).

Observations

1. The middle 3 words of the emended text are to be found in v. 6d (149 = 73 + 3 + 73) constitute an appropriate meaningful centre:

אֲשִׁירָה וְאֶזְמְרָה לַיהוָה I shall sing and make music for YHWH.

It is strikingly highlighted by the abrupt change in the direction of address, being the last colon of the passage phrased as words spoken *about* God (vs. 1-6), immediately before the next section, vs. 7-9, which is addressed to God. For this intriguing rhetorical device, see the General Introduction, "Special devices to highlight the meaningful centre".

2. In terms of the direction of address, the text divides into two distinct parts:
- vs. 1-6 Canto I words spoken *about* God (13 verselines and 26 cola) and
 - vs. 7-14 Canto II words *mainly* addressed to God (9 verselines and 23 cola).

The defining characteristic of Canto I is its homogeneity, being phrased throughout as words spoken *about* God. Canto II, on the other hand, has a 'mixed' form, being a prayer addressed to God, which is halfway interrupted by a short contemplation and concluded by another contemplation and a coda. Outlined in more detail, the entire text divides as follows:

- vs. 1-6 words spoken *about* God (6 Mas. vss. with 13 verselines, 26 cola)
- vs. 7-9 words addressed to God (3 Mas. vss. with 4 verselines, 9 cola)
- v. 10 words spoken *about* God (1 Mas. vs. with 1 verseline, 2 cola)
- vs. 11-12 words addressed to God (2 Mas. vss. with 2 verselines, 6 cola)
- v. 13 words spoken *about* God (1 Mas. vs. with 1 verseline, 3 cola)
- v. 14 **Coda** words spoken *about* God (1 Mas. vs. with 1 verseline, 3 cola).

It is interesting to note that the 3rd person passages together (vs. 1-6, 10 and 13-14) are made up of 26 + 2 + 3 + 3 = 34 (2 x 17) cola, respectively. It is also worth noting that v. 13 stands out as the conclusion of the preceding prayer, while v.14, on the other hand, concludes the entire psalm and functions as a coda. See the General Introduction, "The use of a coda as a device for conclusion".

3. In terms of the poetic structure, the middle colon, v. 6c, is a very likely alternative candidate for meaningful centre (49 = 24 + 1 + 24):

וְאֶזְבְּחָהּ בְּאֶהְלֹוֹ זִבְחֵי תְרוּמָה

Yes, I shall acclaim him in his tent with sacrifice.

Pieter van der Lugt (CAS, § 27.5) has drawn attention to the striking thematic correspondence between the middle colon of this psalm and the second of the two middle cola of Psalm 26: v.6b, 'and I shall go in procession round your altar, YHWH'. This cannot be dismissed as simply a matter of coincidence, but suggest a close connectio between the two psalms. What is more, it might even turn the scales in favour of regarding middle colon of v. 6c as the consciously designed meaningful centre of Psalm 27.

4. Unlike the name יהוה, which features no less than 13 (or perhaps even 14) times in vs. 1a, 1c, 4a, 4c, 4e, 6d, 7a, 8b, 10b, 11a, (12a), 13b, 14a, and 14c, there are only a relatively few divine name numbers (compare Psalms 25 and 30):

- vs. 1-6 26 cola
- vs. 2-3 26 words in total
- v. 4 17 words in total
- vs. 10-12 26 words in total, with 15 before, and 11 after atnach
- vs. 1-14 104 (4 x 26) words before atnach, with 51 (3 x 17) in 2nd person.

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