Psalm 39— Logotechnical Analysis

Guidelines

- Please read the <u>General Introduction</u> as well as the Introduction to <u>Book I</u>.
- For common features found in the numerical analysis charts, see the "Key to the charts".

Specific features of Psalm 39

- Psalm 39 is clearly the follow-up to Psalm 38 in terms of the idea of hope (38:16 and 39:7) in a situation of distress. Its defining characteristic is the use of the numerical value of the keyword הָּבֶּכָל, 'vanity' (37) to determine the number of words in the passage about the struggle of a mortal human being to come to grips with his feelings of gloom and doom (vs. 3-6). It is not surprising to find that the psalm is composed of 37 cola.
- The author also used the keyphrase, 'every mortal being is only a breath of wind', in vs.
 6b and 12b to delimit the central core (vs. 7-12) and to determine the canto structure of the psalm. The core, Canto II, is additionally defined by the ingenious symmetric pattern of its 52 words (divided into 26 + 26) and clearly marked in MT by *selah*.

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

- Van der Lugt: 2, 3-4 | 5-7 || 8-9, 10-11 | 12, 13, 14 (2 cantos and 4 Canticles, with 9 strophes, 15 verselines and 37 cola).
- Fokkelman: 2, 3-4 || 5-6b, 6c-7, 8-10 || 11-12, 13-14 (3 cantos, 7 strophes, 17 verselines and 37 cola, taking vs. 6c-7a as a bicolic verseline and v. 12 as a separate verseline).
- Labuschagne: 2, 3-4 | 5-6 || 7, 8-9 | 10-11, 12 || 13-14 (3 cantos, 4 Canticles, 8 strophes, 15 verselines and 37 cola, based on rhetorical and numerical considerations).
- For an overview of other divisions of the text, see Van der Lugt, CAS, Psalm 39, § 6.

Logotechnical analysis

- Column **a**: words before atnach; **b**: words after atnach.
- Column **c**: words describing feelings of gloom and doom.
- Column d: a fleeting mortal prays for deliverance.
- The numbering of the verselines is shown in brown.

	То	otal	а	b	С	d
Headin לַמְנַצֵּחַ לִידוּתוּן מָזְמוֹר לְדָוִד: 1	ig, v. 1	4	4			
א אָשְׁמְרָה דְרָכַי 2	אָמַרְתִי	3	3		3	
ו בלשוני	מָחֲמוֹא	2	2		2	
ה לְפִי מַחְסוֹם^	אָשְׁמְרָז <mark>2</mark>	3	3		3	
יַשָׁע לְנֶגְדִי:	רְּעֹד רְ	<u>3</u>		3	3	
Strophe 1 Tota	al, v. 2	11	= 8	+ 3	= 11	+ 0

2		0	2	2		2	
3	נָאָלַמְתִי דוּמִיֶּה בביווינים	3	2	2		2	
	הֶחֶשִׁיתִי מִטּוֹב^		2	2		2	
	וּכְאָבִי נֶאְפָר: ביי לאבי		2	4	2	2	. 0
4	Total, v. 3 תַם־לְבָּי בָּקָרָבָּי	1	6 3	= 4	+ 2	= 6	+ 0
4	·) ·	4		3		3	
	בַהַגִיגִי תִבְעַר־אָשׁ^ בבבר בי באייניי		3	3		3	
	<u>הבר</u> עי בלשוני:		2		2	2	
	Total, v. 4		<u>8</u> 14	<u>= 6</u> = 10	+ 2 + 4	= 8	+ 0
	Strophe 2 Total, v. 3-4 Canticle I.1 Total, v. 2-4		<u>14</u> 25	= 10	+ 4	<u>= 14</u> = 25	+ 0 + 0
5		5	3	- 10		- 20	1 0
5	· [· • • • · · ·	5	4	4		4	
	וּמִדַּת יָמַי מַה־הִיאַ^			4	4	-	
	אַרְשָׁה מֶה־חָוֵרל אָנִי: Total v. F		<u>4</u>	7	+ 4	4	
6 <mark>*</mark>	Total, v. 5	6	11 4	= 7 4	+ 4	= 11 4	+ 0
6 <mark>*</mark>	- + + - + + + + + + + + + + + + + + + +	0					
	וְחֶלְוִדי כְאַין נָגְדֶהּ^ אור כבל בליאירם אור בל-		3	3	_	3	
	אַדְ <mark>(כָּל)</mark> ־הֶכָל כָּל־אָדָם וִּצְּב סֶלָה:		<u>5</u>		5	5	
	Total, v. 6 Canticle I.2 Strophe 3 Total, v. 5-6		<u>12</u> 23	<u>= 7</u> = 14	+ 5 + 9	= 12 = 23	+ 0
	Canticle I.2 Strophe 3 Total, v. 5-6 Total, v. 3-6		<u>23</u> 37	= 14	+ 9	= 23	+ 0 + 0
	Canto I Total, v. 2-6		48	= 32	+ 16	= 48	+ 0
				-			
7	, , , , , , , , , , , , , , , , , , ,	7					
7	אַד־בְּצֶׁלֶם יִתְהַלֶּד־אִישׁ	7	4	4			4
7	אַדְ־בְּצֶ'לֶם יִתְהַלֶּדְ־אִישׁ אַדְ־הֶבֶל יֶהֶמָיוּזְ^ 37 = הֶבָל	7	4 3		5		4 3
7	אַדְ־בְּצָעָם יִתְהַעָּדְ־אִישׁ אַדְ־הֶבָל יֶהֶמְיוּזְ^ 37 = הֶבָל יִצְבֹר וְלֹא־יֵרַע מִי־אֹסְפָּם: (37 = 30 + 2 + 5)	7	4	4 3		= 0	4 3 <u>5</u>
7	אַדְ־הְצָעֶלֶם יִתְהַעֶּדְ־אָישׁ אַדְ־הֶבֶּל יֶהֶמְיוּזְ^ 37 = דֶבֶל אַדְ־הֶבֶל יֶהֶמְיוּזְ^ 57 = גָבָל יִצְבֵּר וְלֹא־יֵרַע מִי־אֹסְפָם: (37 = 30 = 37) Strophe 4 Total, v. 7	7	4 3 <u>5</u>	4 3	5		4 3
	אַדְ־הָצָּעָׂם יִתְהַעָּדְ־אִישׁ אַדְ־הֶבָּל יֶהֶמְיוּזְ^ 37 = זֶבָל יִצְבַר וְלֹא־יֵרַע מִי־אֹסְפָּם: (37 = 30 = 5 + 2 + 30 יִצְבַר וְלֹא־יֵרַע מִי־אֹסְפָּם: (37 = 5 + 2 + 5) Strophe 4 Total, v. 7 Middle verseline: וְעַתְּה מֵה־פְוִיתִי אֲרֹנָי		4 3 <u>5</u> 12 4	4 3 = 7	5		4 3 <u>5</u> + 12 4
	אַדְ־הְצָעֶלֶם יִתְהַעֶּדְ־אָישׁ אַדְ־הֶבֶּל יֶהֶמְיוּזְ^ 37 = דֶבֶל אַדְ־הֶבֶל יֶהֶמְיוּזְ^ 57 = גָבָל יִצְבֵּר וְלֹא־יֵרַע מִי־אֹסְפָם: (37 = 30 = 37) Strophe 4 Total, v. 7		4 3 <u>5</u> 12	4 3 = 7	<u>5</u> + 5		4 3 <u>5</u> + 12
	אַדְ־הָצָעֶשׁ יִתְהַעֶּדְ־אָישׁ אַדְ־הֶבֶּעָ יֶהֶמְיוּזְ^ 37 - הֶבֶּל אַדְ־הֶבֶּל יֶהֶמְיוּזְ^ 57 - 37 (5 + 2 + 30 = 37) - יִצְּבּר וְלֹא־יִרַע מִי־אֹסְפָם: Strophe 4 Total, v. 7 Middle verseline: וְעַתָּה מַה־פְּוִיתִי אֲרֹנָי (15 = 7 + 1 + 7) - תּוֹחַלְתִי לְדָ הִיא: Meaningful centre Total, v. 8		4 3 <u>5</u> 12 4 3	4 3 = 7 4	5 + 5 3	= 0	4 3 <u>5</u> + 12 4 3
8	אַדְּ־הָצָעָשׁ יִתְהַעָּדְ־אָישׁ אַדְּ־הֶבָל יֶהֶמְיוּזְא 17 = 57 = הָבָל (5 + 2 + 30 = 37) יִצְבּר וְלֹא־יִרַע מִי־אֹסְפָּם: (5 + 2 + 30 = 37) יִצְבּר וְלֹא־יִרַע מִי־אֹסְפָם: Strophe 4 Total, v. 7 Middle verseline: יעּתָה מַה־קּוִיתִי אֲדֹנָי (15 = 7 + 1 + 7) תּוֹחֵלְתִי לְדְ הִיא: Meaningful centre Total, v. 8 מְכָל־פִּשֶׁעֵי הַצִּילֵנִי	8	4 3 <u>5</u> 12 4 <u>3</u> 7	4 3 = 7 4 = 4	5 + 5 3	= 0	4 3 5 + 12 4 3 + 7
8	אַדְ־הָצָעָם יִתְהַעָּדְ־אִישׁ אַדְ־הָצָעָם יִתְהַעָּדְ־אִישׁ אַדְ־הֶבֶל יֶהֶמְיוּזְ (5 + 2 + 30 = 37) יִצְבֹר וְלֹא־יִרַע מִי־אֹסְבָּם: (5 + 2 + 30 = 37) יִצְבֹר וְלֹא־יִרַע מִי־אֹסְבָּם: (5 + 2 + 30 = 37) ייַצְבֹר וְלֹא־יִרַע מִי־אֹסְבָּם: (5 + 2 + 30 = 37) ייַצְבֹר וְלֹא־יִרַע מִי־אֹסְבָּם: (5 + 2 + 30 = 37) ייַצְבֹר וְלֹא־יִרַע מִי־אֹסְבָּם: (5 + 2 + 30 = 37) ייַצְבֹר וְלֹא־יִרַע מִי־אֹסְבָּם: (5 + 2 + 30 = 37) ייַצְבֹר וְלֹא־יִרַע מִי־אֹסְבָּם: (5 + 2 + 30 = 37) ייַצְבֹר וְלֹא־יִרַע מִי־אֹסְבָּם: (5 + 2 + 30 = 37) ייַצְבֹר וְלֹא־יִרַע מִי־אֹסְבָּם: (5 + 2 + 30 = 37) ייַצְבֹר וְלֹא־יִרַע מִי־אֹסְבָּם: (5 + 2 + 30 = 37) ייַצְבֹר וְלֹא־יִרַע מִי־אֹסְבָּם: (5 + 2 + 30 = 37) ייַצְבַר וְלֹא־יִרַע מִי־אֹסְבָּם: (5 + 2 + 30 = 37) ייַצְבַר וְלֹא־יִרַע מִי־אֹסְבָּם: (5 + 2 + 30 = 37) ייַצְבַר וְלֹא־יִרַע מִי־אַסְבָּם: (5 + 2 + 30 = 37) ייַצְבַר וְלֹא־יִרַע מִי־אַסְבָּם: (15 = 7 + 1 + 7) ייַב יאַרָּיָרָ הָיא: (15 = 7 + 1 + 7) ייַב יאַרָּקָרָית יַדָּר הָיאָ: (15 = 7 + 1 + 7) ייַב יאַרָּר הָדָאָבין הַיָּבָר וָלָאָירַרָע מָיַרָּקָרָר הָדָיָרָיָם: (15 = 7 + 1 + 7) ייַרָּרָאָר הָדָרָא מָרָר הָרָיקָרָאַירַיע מָיראָסָבָם:	8	4 3 <u>5</u> 12 4 <u>3</u> 7 3	4 3 = 7 4 = 4	5 + 5 3	= 0	4 3 5 + 12 4 3 + 7 3
8	אַדְ־הָצָעֶשׁ יִתְהַעֶּדְ־אִישׁ אַדְ־הָבֶע יֶהָמָיוּזְא 17 - 37 = הֶבֶל אַדְּ־הֶבֶל יֶהֶמָיוּזְא 17 - 37 - 37 (5 + 2 + 30 = 37) :יַצְּבּר וְלֹא־יִרַע מִי־אֹסְפָם: (5 + 2 + 30 = 37) Strophe 4 Total, v. 7 Middle verseline: יִצְּרִנְיּי (15 = 7 + 1 + 7) :יָשָׁתָּה מָה־פָּוִיתִי אֲדֹנָי (15 = 7 + 1 + 7) :יָשָּרָת יַלְדָ הִיא (15 = 7 + 1 + 7) :יָשָרָת יַלָד הִיא (15 = 7 + 1 + 7) :יָשָרָת יַלָד הִיא (15 = 7 + 1 + 7) :יָשָרָניי (15 = 7 + 1 + 7) :יָשָרַנְיַר יַלְדָ הִיא: יַשְּרָנַיָּר מָדְנִיי Meaningful centre :יָשָּרַניי (15 = 7 + 1 + 7) :יָשָרַניי (15 = 7 + 1 + 7) :יָשָרָניי (15 = 7 + 1 + 7) :יַשָּרָניי (15 = 7 + 1 + 7) :יָשָרָניי (15 = 7 + 1 + 7) :יָשָרָניי (15 = 7 + 1 + 7) :יַשָּרָניי (15 = 7 + 1 + 7) :יַשָּרַניין (15 = 7 + 1 + 7) :יַשָּרַניי (15 = 7 + 1 + 7) :יַשָּרָניי (15 = 7 + 1 + 7) :יַשָּרַניי (15 = 7 + 1 + 7) :יַשָּרַניי	8	4 <u>5</u> <u>12</u> 4 <u>3</u> 7 3 4 <u>7</u> 14	$ \begin{array}{r} 4 \\ 3 \\ = 7 \\ 4 \\ = 4 \\ 3 \\ = 3 \\ = 7 \\ \end{array} $	5 + 5 3 + 3 + 3 4 + 4 + 7	= 0 = 0 = 0 = 0	4 3 5 + 12 4 3 + 7 3 4 + 7 + 14
8	אַהְ־הָצָעָשׁ יִתְהַעָּהְ־אִישׁ אַהְ־הָצָעָשׁ יִתְהַעָּהְיוּזִר אַהְדּהָבָל יֶהֶמְיוּזְר (5+2+30=37) יִצְבַר וְלֹא־יִרַע מִי־אָסְבָּם: Strophe 4 Total, v. 7 Middle verseline: ייָאָרָנִיי (15 = 7 + 1 + 7) יוֹתַלְתִי לְך הִיא: (15 = 7 + 1 + 7) יוֹתַלְתִי לְך הִיא: מַרָּבָּל-פְּשָׁעַי הַצִּילֵנִי Meaningful centre Total, v. 8 מַכָּל-פְּשָׁעַי הַצִּילֵנִי Strophe 5 Total, v. 8-9 Canticle II.1 Total, v. 7-9	8	4 <u>5</u> <u>12</u> 4 <u>3</u> 7 3 4 <u>7</u> 14	4 3 = 7 4 = 4 3 = 3	5 + 5 3 + 3 4 + 4	= 0 = 0 = 0	4 3 + 12 4 3 + 7 3 4 + 7
8	אַדְ־הָצָעֶשׁ יִתְהַעֶּדְ־אִישׁ אַדְ־הָבֶע יֶהָמָיוּזְא 17 - 37 = הֶבֶל אַדְּ־הֶבֶל יֶהֶמָיוּזְא 17 - 37 - 37 (5 + 2 + 30 = 37) :יַצְּבּר וְלֹא־יִרַע מִי־אֹסְפָם: (5 + 2 + 30 = 37) Strophe 4 Total, v. 7 Middle verseline: יִצְּרִנְיּי (15 = 7 + 1 + 7) :יָשָׁתָּה מָה־פָּוִיתִי אֲדֹנָי (15 = 7 + 1 + 7) :יָשָּרָת יַלְדָ הִיא (15 = 7 + 1 + 7) :יָשָרָת יַלָד הִיא (15 = 7 + 1 + 7) :יָשָרָת יַלָד הִיא (15 = 7 + 1 + 7) :יָשָרָניי (15 = 7 + 1 + 7) :יָשָרַנְיַר יַלְדָ הִיא: יַשְּרָנַיָּר מָדְנִיי Meaningful centre :יָשָּרַניי (15 = 7 + 1 + 7) :יָשָרַניי (15 = 7 + 1 + 7) :יָשָרָניי (15 = 7 + 1 + 7) :יַשָּרָניי (15 = 7 + 1 + 7) :יָשָרָניי (15 = 7 + 1 + 7) :יָשָרָניי (15 = 7 + 1 + 7) :יַשָּרָניי (15 = 7 + 1 + 7) :יַשָּרַניין (15 = 7 + 1 + 7) :יַשָּרַניי (15 = 7 + 1 + 7) :יַשָּרָניי (15 = 7 + 1 + 7) :יַשָּרַניי (15 = 7 + 1 + 7) :יַשָּרַניי	8	4 <u>5</u> <u>12</u> 4 <u>3</u> 7 3 4 <u>7</u> 14	$ \begin{array}{r} 4 \\ 3 \\ = 7 \\ 4 \\ = 4 \\ 3 \\ = 3 \\ = 7 \\ \end{array} $	5 + 5 3 + 3 + 3 4 + 4 + 7	= 0 = 0 = 0 = 0	4 3 5 + 12 4 3 + 7 3 4 + 7 + 14
8 9	אַדְ־הָבֶעָל יִהְהַיָּוֹדְ אַדְ־הֶבֶע יֶהָמָיוּזְ אַדְ־הֶבֶע יֶהָמָיוּזְ אַדְּ־הֶבֶע יֶהָמִיוּזְ (5 + 2 + 30 = 37) : יַצְבּר וְלֹא־יִרַע מִי־אֹסְפָם: (5 + 2 + 30 = 37) Strophe 4 Total, v. 7 Middle verseline: יַזְעַהָּ מַה־קּוִיתִי אֲדֹנָי (15 = 7 + 1 + 7) : יַזְרָ מַה־קּוִיתִי אֲדֹנָי (15 = 7 + 1 + 7) : יַזְרָ מַה־קּוִיתִי אֲדֹנָי (15 = 7 + 1 + 7) : יַזְרָ מַה־קּוִיתִי אֲדֹנָי (15 = 7 + 1 + 7) : יַזְרָ (15 = 7 + 1 + 7) : יַזְרָ יַקּרָלְתָי לְדָ הָיאַ: יַקָיַי אַרְפָת נְבָל אַל־הְשָׁימֵנִי Strophe 5 Total, v. 8-9 Canticle II.1 : Total, v. 7-9 נְקָאֶלַמְתִי לָאׁ אֶפְתַח־פִּי	8	4 3 <u>5</u> 4 <u>3</u> 7 3 4 7 <u>14</u> 26 4 <u>3</u>	$ \begin{array}{r} 4 \\ 3 \\ = 7 \\ 4 \\ = 4 \\ 3 \\ = 3 \\ = 7 \\ = 14 \\ \end{array} $	5 + 5 3 + 3 + 3 + 4 + 7 + 12 3	= 0 = 0 = 0 = 0 = 0	$ \begin{array}{r} 4 \\ 3 \\ 5 \\ + 12 \\ 4 \\ 3 \\ + 7 \\ 3 \\ 4 \\ + 7 \\ + 14 \\ + 26 \\ 4 \\ 3 \end{array} $
8 9 10	אַדְּ־הָצָעָשׁ יִתְהַעָּדְ־אִישׁ אַדְּ־הָבָע יֶהֶמְיוּזְר 17 = הָבָל אַדְּדַע יֶהְמָיוּזְר 17 = 37 יִצְבַר וְלֹא־יִדַע מִי־אֹסְפָם: (5 + 2 + 30 = 37) יִצְבַר וְלֹא־יִדַע מִי־אֹסְפָם: (5 + 2 + 30 = 37) ityan מַת־קוּיתִי אֲרֹנָי Middle verseline: ייאָרָזי אַרָדָי ועקּר פּשְׁעֵי הַצִילֵנִי Meaningful centre Total, v. 8 ימָכָל־פּשְׁעֵי הַצִילֵנִי Strophe 5 Canticle II.1 Total, v. 8-9 נָאֶלַמְתִי לֹא אֶפְתַח־פִּי נָאֶלַמְתִי לֹא אֶפְתַח־פִּי	8 9 10	4 3 <u>5</u> 12 4 3 7 3 4 7 14 26 4 3 7	$ \begin{array}{c} 4 \\ 3 \\ = 7 \\ 4 \\ = 4 \\ 3 \\ = 7 \\ = 14 \\ 4 \\ = 4 \end{array} $	5 + 5 3 + 3 4 + 4 + 7 + 12	= 0 = 0 = 0 = 0	$ \begin{array}{r} 4 \\ 3 \\ 5 \\ + 12 \\ 4 \\ 3 \\ + 7 \\ 3 \\ 4 \\ + 7 \\ + 14 \\ + 26 \\ 4 \\ 3 \\ + 7 \\ +$
8 9	אַדְּ־הָצָעָשׁ יִתְהַעָּדְ־אִישׁ אַדְ־הָבָל יֶהֶמְיוּזְר 17 = 37 אַדְּרַהֶבָל יֶהֶמְיוּזְר 17 = 37 אַדְרַהָבָל יֶהָמִיזּזְר מִזִי־אֹסְפָם: (5+2+30=37) יִצְבַר וְלֹא־יִרַע מִי־אֹסְפָם: (5+2+30=37) Middle verseline: ייַזיי (15 = 7 + 1 + 7) Meaningful centre Total, v. 7 Meaningful centre Total, v. 8 מְכָל־פְּשָׁעֵי הַצִּילֵנִי Strophe 5 Canticle II.1 Total, v. 8-9 נָאֶלַמְתִי לֹא אֶפְתַח־פִּי נָאֶלַמְתִי לֹא אֶפְתַח־פִּי Total, v. 7-9	8	4 3 <u>5</u> 4 <u>3</u> 7 3 4 7 <u>14</u> 26 4 <u>3</u>	$ \begin{array}{r} 4 \\ 3 \\ = 7 \\ 4 \\ = 4 \\ 3 \\ = 3 \\ = 7 \\ = 14 \\ 4 \\ \end{array} $	5 + 5 3 + 3 + 3 + 4 + 7 + 12 3	= 0 = 0 = 0 = 0 = 0	$ \begin{array}{r} 4 \\ 3 \\ 5 \\ + 12 \\ 4 \\ 3 \\ + 7 \\ 3 \\ 4 \\ + 7 \\ + 14 \\ + 26 \\ 4 \\ 3 \\ \end{array} $
8 9 10	אַדְ־הָצָעָשׁ יִתְהַעָּדְ־אִישׁ אַדְ־הָצָעָם יִתְהַעָּדִי אִישִׁ אַדְ־הָבָל יֶהֶמְיוּזְי (5+2+30=37) :יִצְּבַר וְלֹא־יִדַע מִי־אֹסְבָּם: Strophe 4 Total, v. 7 Middle verseline: ייַאַרָייי אָרֹנָיי (15=7+1+7) :אוֹתַלְתִי לְד הִיא (15=7+1+7) :אוֹתַלְתִי לְד הִיא מוֹתַלְתִי לְד הִיא ישׁיַתָר בְּדָל אַל־תְּשִׁימֵנִי Meaningful centre Total, v. 8 מְכָל־פְּשָׁעַי הַצִּילֵנִי Strophe 5 Total, v. 8-9 Canticle II.1 Total, v. 7-9 נָי אַתָּה עָשִׁיתָ: הַסָר מַעָלַי נְגָעֶדָי	8 9 10	4 3 <u>5</u> 4 3 7 3 4 7 14 26 4 3 7 3 4	$ \begin{array}{r} 4 \\ 3 \\ = 7 \\ 4 \\ = 4 \\ 3 \\ = 7 \\ = 14 \\ 4 \\ = 4 \\ 3 \\ \end{array} $	5 + 5 3 + 3 + 3 + 4 + 7 + 12 3	= 0 = 0 = 0 = 0 = 0 = 0	$ \begin{array}{r} 4 \\ 3 \\ 5 \\ + 12 \\ 4 \\ 3 \\ + 7 \\ 3 \\ 4 \\ + 7 \\ + 14 \\ + 26 \\ 4 \\ 3 \\ + 7 \\ +$
8 9 10	אַדְ־הָבֶּלֶ וּתְהַלֶּדְ־אִישׁ אַדְ־הֶבֶל יֶהֶמְיוּזְר 17 - 37 אַדְ־הֶבֶל יֶהֶמְיוּזְר 17 אַדְּבַר וְלֹא־יִרַע מִי־אֹסְכָּם: (5 + 2 + 30 = 37) יִצְבַר וְלֹא־יִרַע מִי־אֹסְכָּם: (5 + 2 + 30 = 37) יזעתּה מַה־קּוִיתִי אֲרֹנָי Middle verseline: ייזער זיי (15 = 7 + 1 + 7) Meaningful centre Total, v. 7 מּהָלַר פְּשָׁעֵי הַצִּילֵנִי Meaningful centre Total, v. 8 קרְפַּת נְבָל אַל־הְּשִׁימֵנִי Strophe 5 Canticle II.1 Total, v. 8-9 קר אַשָּרַ וּזִעָר יַהָמָר מַעָלַי וּנְעֶקָה	8 9 10	4 3 <u>5</u> 12 4 3 7 3 4 7 14 26 4 3 7 3 4 7 3 4 7	$ \begin{array}{c} 4 \\ 3 \\ = 7 \\ 4 \\ = 4 \\ 3 \\ = 7 \\ = 14 \\ 4 \\ = 4 \\ 3 \\ = 3 \\ = 3 \\ = 3 \\ = 3 \\ $	5 + 5 3 + 3 4 + 4 + 7 + 12 + 12 + 3 + 3 + 3	= 0 = 0 = 0 = 0 = 0 = 0 = 0	$ \begin{array}{r} 4 \\ 3 \\ 5 \\ + 12 \\ 4 \\ 3 \\ + 7 \\ 3 \\ 4 \\ + 7 \\ + 14 \\ + 26 \\ 4 \\ 3 \\ + 7 \\ 3 \\ 4 \\ + 7 \\ 5 \\ 5 \\ 5 \\ 5 \\ 5 \\ 5 \\ 5 \\ $
8 9 10	אַדְּ־הָצָעָשׁם יִתְהַעָּדְ־אִישׁ אַדְ־הָבָל יֶהֶמְיוּזְר 17 - 37 אַדְּדַר מָיזּזְר 17 - 37 אַדְרָבָל יֶהָמִיזּזְר מַזִר אָסְבָּם: (5 + 2 + 30 = 37) ייִצְבַר זְלֹא־יִדַע מִי־אָסְבָּם: (5 + 2 + 30 = 37) Strophe 4 Total, v. 7 Middle verseline: ייַשְׁתָּד מַדָּר קוּייָזָר זיי (15 = 7 + 1 + 7) Meaningful centre 10 מוֹחַלְתִי לְדָ הִיא: ישׁתָּר מָשָׁעַי הַצִּילֵנִי Meaningful centre 10 זָרְפַת נְבָל אַל־תְּשִׁימֵנִי Strophe 5 Total, v. 8-9 Canticle II.1 Total, v. 8-9 נָאֶלַמְתִי לָא אֶפְתַח־פִּי הַסַר מַשָּלַי נְגָשֶדּ זַרָסַר מַשָּלַי נְגָשֶדּ זַרָסַר מַשָּלַי נְגָשֶדּ Total, v. 10 מְתָנְרַת יְדָדָ אֶנִי כָלִיתִי: Total, v. 11 Numerical Total, v. 8-9	8 9 10	4 3 <u>5</u> 12 4 3 7 3 4 7 14 26 4 3 7 3 4 7 3 4 7 14	$ \begin{array}{c} 4 \\ 3 \\ = 7 \\ 4 \\ = 4 \\ 3 \\ = 7 \\ = 14 \\ 4 \\ = 4 \\ 3 \\ = 3 \\ = 7$	5 + 5 3 + 3 + 3 + 4 + 7 + 12 3 + 3 + 3 + 3 + 4 + 4 + 7	= 0 = 0 = 0 = 0 = 0 = 0 = 0 = 0 = 0	$ \begin{array}{r} 4 \\ 3 \\ 5 \\ + 12 \\ 4 \\ 3 \\ + 7 \\ 3 \\ 4 \\ + 7 \\ + 14 \\ + 26 \\ 4 \\ 3 \\ + 7 \\ + 14 \\ + 14 \\ + 14 \\ + 7 \\ + 14 \\ + 7 \\ + 14 \\ + 7 \\ + 14 \\ + 7 \\ + 7 \\ + 14 \\ + 7 \\ + 7 \\ + 14 \\ + 7 \\ + 7 \\ + 14 \\ + 7 \\ + 7 \\ + 14 \\ + 7 \\ + 7 \\ + 14 \\ + 7 \\ + 7 \\ + 14 \\ + 7 \\ + 7 \\ + 14 \\ + 7 \\ + 7 \\ + 14 \\ + 7 \\ + 7 \\ + 14 \\ + 7 \\ + 7 \\ + 14 \\ + 7 \\ + 7 \\ + 14 \\ + 7 \\ + 7 \\ + 14 \\ + 7 \\ + 7 \\ + 14 \\ + 7 \\ + 14 \\ + 7 \\ + 7 \\ + 14 \\ + 7 \\ + 14 \\ + 7 \\ + 14 \\ + 7 \\ + 14 \\ + 7 \\ + 14 \\ + 7 \\ + 14 \\ + 7 \\ + 14 \\ + 7 \\ + 14 \\ + 7 \\ + 14 \\ + 7 \\ + 14 \\ + 10 \\$
8 9 10	אַדְ־הָבֶּלֶ וּתְהַלֶּדְ־אִישׁ אַדְ־הֶבֶל יֶהֶמְיוּזְר 17 - 37 אַדְ־הֶבֶל יֶהֶמְיוּזְר 17 אַדְּבַר וְלֹא־יִרַע מִי־אֹסְכָּם: (5 + 2 + 30 = 37) יִצְבַר וְלֹא־יִרַע מִי־אֹסְכָּם: (5 + 2 + 30 = 37) יזעתּה מַה־קּוִיתִי אֲרֹנָי Middle verseline: ייזער זיי (15 = 7 + 1 + 7) Meaningful centre Total, v. 7 מּהָלַר פְּשָׁעֵי הַצִּילֵנִי Meaningful centre Total, v. 8 קרְפַּת נְבָל אַל־הְּשִׁימֵנִי Strophe 5 Canticle II.1 Total, v. 8-9 קר אַשָּרַ וּזִעָר יַהָמָר מַעָלַי וּנְעֶקָה	8 9 10	4 3 <u>5</u> 12 4 3 7 3 4 7 14 26 4 3 7 3 4 7 3 4 7	$ \begin{array}{c} 4 \\ 3 \\ = 7 \\ 4 \\ = 4 \\ 3 \\ = 7 \\ = 14 \\ 4 \\ = 4 \\ 3 \\ = 3 \\ = 3 \\ = 3 \\ = 3 \\ $	5 + 5 3 + 3 4 + 4 + 7 + 12 + 12 + 3 + 3 + 3	= 0 = 0 = 0 = 0 = 0 = 0 = 0	$ \begin{array}{r} 4 \\ 3 \\ 5 \\ + 12 \\ 4 \\ 3 \\ + 7 \\ 3 \\ 4 \\ + 7 \\ + 14 \\ + 26 \\ 4 \\ 3 \\ + 7 \\ 3 \\ 4 \\ + 7 \\ 5 \\ 5 \\ 5 \\ 5 \\ 5 \\ 5 \\ 5 \\ $

12	יִפַּרְתָ אִיש	בְּתוֹכָחוֹת עַל־עָוֹן	12	5	5			5
	^	וַהֶּמֶס כָּעָשׁ חֲמוּדוֹ		3	3			3
	אַך הֶבָל כָּל־אָדָם סֶלָה:			4		4		4
	Strophe 7	Total, v. 12		12	= 8	+ 4	= 0	+ 12
	Canticle II.2	Total, v. 10-12		<u>26</u>	= 15	+ 11	= 0	+ <u>26</u>
	Canto II	Total, v. 7-12		52	= 29	+ 23	= 0	+ 52
13 Coda	וָה	שָׁמְעָה־תְפִּלְתִי <mark>יְה</mark>	13	3	3	3		
the conclud	ling prayer	וְשַׁוְעָתִי הַאֲזִינָה		2	2		2	
	אֶרַשׁ	אָל-דִּמְשָׁתִי אַל-תָ		4	4		4	
		כִּי גֵר אָנֹכִי עִמָּדְ	14	4	4		4	
	:*	תּוֹשָׁב כְּכָל-אֲבוֹתָ		<u>3</u>		3	3	
		Total, v. 13		16	= 13	+ 3	= 16	+ 0
14	ה^	רָשַׁע מִמֶּנִּי וְאַרְלִיוָ	15	3	3		3	
	:*	בְּטֶרֶם אֵלֵך וְאֵינָנִי		3		3	3	
		Total, v. 14		6	= 3	+ 3	= 6	+ 0
Car	nto III Strophe 8	Total, v. 13-14		<u>22</u>	= 16	+ 6	= 22	+ 0
		Total, v. 12-14		<u>34</u>	= 24	+ 10	= 22	+ <u>12</u>
		Total, v. 2-14		1 <u>22</u>	= 77	+ 45	= 70	+ <mark>52</mark>
With th	ne heading and 7	2x), v. 1-14 סֶלְד		128	= 81	+ 47		

* A slight emendation of the text in v. 6b is necessary: I read אַך הֶבֶל אָך הָבֶל אָד בָּל-הֶבֶל (see *BHS*), not only on the basis of the evident dittography and the awkwardness of the MT phrase, but also in light of the two other occurrences of the term אָך הֶבֶל in vs. 7 and 12. Naturally, this emendation will have an effect on the word-count.

Observations

 The arithmetic centre of the poem on the level of words is constituted by the two words "עַּקָּה מָה, 'And now, what...?', in v. 8a (122 = 60 + 2 + 60). It is unlikely that they were consciously designed as the meaningful centre, seeing the incompleteness of the phrase. The middle verseline, v. 8, would be a most appropriate meaningful centre, because it contains the quintessential idea of the psalm: waiting for YHWH in hope despite adversities and suffering. It clearly harks back to the theme of hope in a distressing situation, so strongly expressed in Ps. 38:16 – see Observation 3 in my Analysis of <u>Psalm 38</u>.

ןְעַתֶּה מֵה־קּוִיתִי אֲדֹנָי תּוֹחַלְתִּי לְדָ הִיא And now, YHWH, what do I wait for? My hope is in you!

Significantly, the pivotal verseline is not only flanked by **7** verselines (15 = 7 + 1 + 7) but also made up of **7** words consisting of altogether **26** letters. For a similar situation, see Observation 3 in my Analysis of <u>Psalm 40</u>.

2. Like Psalm 38, the psalm has a tripartite canto structure: vs. 2-6, 7-12, and 13-14, which is based on rhetorical and logotechnical considerations.¹

Canto I, vs. 2-6 Complaint about the transience of human existence Canto II, vs. 7-12 Despite this, my hope is in you, YHWH

Canto III, vs. 13-14 Conclusion: hear my prayer, God, before I cease to be.

The two hard breaks between vs. 6||7 and 12||13 caused by the refrain-like phrase אָד הֶבָל כְּל-אָרָם, 'every mortal being is only a breath of wind', divide the text into three sections: Cantos I, II, and III, which is in MT underscored by the *selahs*.

Canto I is an unmistakable coherent structural unity as shown by the fact that it contains a strict numerically devised 37-word passage, vs. 3-6 – see Observation 4.
 Canto II is likewise a coherent unity, but divides into 2 Canticles, vs. 7-9 and 10-12. It is made up of exactly 52 words, with 26 in each section, symmetrically arranged in the following way:

Note the perfect numerical chiasmus, which firmly links the two Canticles:

26 = 12 + 14 in vs. 7-9 26 = 14 + 12 in vs. 10-12.

Canto III (vs. 13-14), the final prayer, is clearly a coda. It is significantly made up of **22** (2×11) words – see Observation 5 in my Analysis of <u>Psalm 38</u>.

4. Canto I, vs. 2-6, is significantly made up of **37** words, which represents the numerical value of the keyword הָבֶר 'vanity', occurring in vs. 6b, 7a and 12b (5 + 2 + 30 = **37**).² See the General Introduction, "The numerical value of a keyword in the text", for more examples of this intriguing device.

The deliberate use of 37 words here vividly brings to mind the structuring role of the number **37** on verse level in the book of Ecclesiastes, which deals explicitly with 'vanities'. The book is made up of **222** (6×37) verses!

5. The name הוה occurs only twice: in vs. 5a and 13a.

© 2009	
Dr. C.J. Labuschagne	Senior Lecturer in Semitic Languages (retired),
Brinkhorst 44	University of Pretoria, South Africa
9751 AT Haren (Gron)	and
The Netherlands	Professor of Old Testament (retired),
labuschagne.cj@planet.nl	University of Groningen, The Netherlands

¹ Van der Lugt, who finds a bipartite structure, does not take into account the demarcating function of the refrain in vs. 6 and 12, which is supported by the two selahs. This also applies to Fokkelman, who finds a tripartite structure that differs from mine: vs. 2-4, 5-10, and 11-14.

² The number 37 is based on the *decimal value* of the word – see the General Introduction, p. 5.