

# Psalm 58— Logotechnical Analysis Guidelines

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

## Specific features of Psalm 58

- Psalm 58 is the first in a series of 8 Davidic psalms (58-65), which comprise altogether **104** (4 x 26) verselines, exactly as in the case of the preceding 7 psalms (51-57). However, as I argued in the Introduction, Psalm 58 also opens a second sub-group of 7 psalms (58-64), because Psalm 65 belongs to the third sub-group of 7 psalms (65-71).
- It is a real gem of numerical compositional art. Because of its regular structure, the author could highlight its meaningful centre (v. 7) in no less than three ways:
  - 1) by situating it in the arithmetic middle of the 11 verselines and 22 cola,
  - 2) by positioning the single occurrence of the name YHWH within the centre (in the same way as Elohim in Psalm 61), and
  - 3) by phrasing the meaningful centre as words directly addressed to God.
 Psalm 58 shares this feature with Psalm 37.

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

- Van der Lugt and Labuschagne: 2-3, 4-6 || 7 || 8-10 || 11-12 (3 cantos with 5 strophes, 11 verselines and 22 cola).
- Fokkelman: 2-3, 4-6 || 7-8a, 8b-10, 11-12 (2 stanzas with 5 strophes, 12 bicolon verselines and 24 cola, taking v. 8 as two bicolic verselines).

## Logotechnical analysis

- Columns **a** and **b** show the number of words before and after the atnach.
- Column **c**: words not directly spoken to God; **d**: words specifically addressed to God.
- The numbering of the verselines is shown in **brown**.

		Total	a	b	c	d
1	לְמִנְצִיחַ אֱלֹהֵי תְשׁוּחָה לְדָוִד מִכְתָּם : Heading	5	5			
2*	הָאֱמֻנָה אֱלֹהִים צְדָק תְּדַבְּרוּן־ מִיֹּשְׁרִים תִּשְׁפָּטוּ בְּנֵי אָדָם : צְדָק = 41	1	4	4	4	4
3	אֶף־בְּלֵב עוֹלֹת תִּפְעֲלוּן בְּאֶרֶץ חֲמַס יִדְיָכֶם תִּפְלְסוּן : בְּאֶרֶץ = 41	2	4	4	4	4
	Compare v. 12b Total, v. 3	8	= 8	+ 0	= 8	+ 0
	Strophe 1 Total, v. 2-3	16	= 12	+ 4	= 16	+ 0
4	זִרוּ רְשָׁעִים מִרְחֹמַי תַּעֲוּ מִבֶּטֶן דְּבָרִי כֹזֵב : Total, v. 4	3	3	3	3	3
5	חַמַּת־לְמוֹ כְּדַמוֹת חַמַּת־נִחְשָׁה כְּמוֹ־פֶתֶן חָרַשׁ יֵאָטֵם אֲזִנּוֹ : Total, v. 5	4	5	5	5	5
	Total, v. 4-5	10	= 5	+ 5	= 10	+ 0
	Total, v. 4-5	17	= 8	+ 9	= 17	+ 0
6	אֲשֶׁר לֹא־יִשְׁמַע לְקוֹל מְלַחְשִׁים־ חוֹבֵר חֲבָרִים מִחֶפְזָם : Total, v. 6	5	5	5	5	5
	Total, v. 6	3	3	3	3	3
	Strophe 2 Total, v. 4-6	8	= 5	+ 3	= 8	+ 0
	Canto I Total, v. 2-6	25	= 13	+ 12	= 25	+ 0
		41	= 25	+ 16	= 41	+ 0

7	Middle verseline and middle cola: Meaningful centre	אלהים הרס־שנימו בפִּימוּ מִלְתַּעוֹת כְּפִירִים נִתֵץ יְהוָה: Canto II Strophe 3 v. 7	6	4	4	4	4
				4		4	4
				8	= 4 + 4	= 0 + 8	
8*		וּמָאֲסוּ כְמו־מַיִם יִתְהַלְכוּ־לְמוֹ	8a	7	5	5	5
	Middle words: Meaningful centre on word level	95 = 41 + 13 + 41 יִרְדֵּף הַצֵּיָו כְּמוֹ יִתְמַלְלוּ: Total, v. 7-8			13	= 9 + 4	= 5 + 8
					4		4
					17	= 9 + 8	= 9 + 8
9		כְּמוֹ שֶׁבִּלּוֹל תִּמָּס יִהְיֶה־ נִפְלֵ אֵשֶׁת בַּל־חֲזוֹ שָׁמֶשׁ: Total, v. 9 Numerical chiasmus, v. 7-9 Total, v. 4-9			8	4	4
					5		5
					9	= 4 + 5	= 9 + 0
					26	= 13 + 13	= 18 + 8
					51	= 26 + 25	= 43 + 8
10		בְּטָרִם יָבִינוּ סִירְתִּיכֶם אָטָד־ כְּמוֹ־חֵי כְמוֹ־חֲרוֹן יִשְׁעָרְנוּ: Total, v. 10 Strophe 4 Total, v. 8-10 Total, v. 3-10			9	4	4
					5		5
					9	= 4 + 5	= 9 + 0
					27	= 13 + 14	= 27 + 0
					68	= 38 + 30	= 60 + 8
11		יִשְׂמַח צַדִּיק כִּי־תִזְהַ נֶקֶם־ פְּעָמָיו יִרְחֹץ בְּדָם הַרְשָׁע: Total, v. 11 Total, v. 2-11			10	5	5
					4		4
					9	= 5 + 4	= 9 + 0
					85	= 47 + 38	= 77 + 8
12		וַיֹּאמֶר אֲדָם אֶדְ־פְרִי לַצַּדִּיק־ אֶדְ־יִשְׁ־אֱלֹהִים שִׁפְטִים בְּאֶרֶץ: בְּאֶרֶץ = 41 Total, v. 12 Canto III Strophe 5 Total, v. 11-12 Subtotal, v. 8b-12 Total, v. 2-12 With the heading, v. 1-12:			11	5	5
					5		5
					10	= 5 + 5	= 10 + 0
					19	= 10 + 9	= 19 + 0
					41	= 18 + 23	= 41 + 0
					95	= 52 + 43	= 87 + 8
					100	= 57 + 43	

\* In v. 1, I corrected the word אֱלִים to read אֱלִים, 'gods'. In v. 8b, I followed the Masoretic Qere reading.

## Observations

- In terms of the 95 words of the poem, the middle word is נִתֵץ, 'rip out!' (vs. 7b), which is situated precisely in the middle of the 13 words in vs. 7-8a, (95 = 41 + 13 + 41):

אלהים הרס־שנימו בפִּימוּ  
מִלְתַּעוֹת כְּפִירִים נִתֵץ יְהוָה:  
וּמָאֲסוּ כְמו־מַיִם יִתְהַלְכוּ־לְמוֹ

God, smash their teeth in their mouths; rip out the fangs of the young lions, YHWH!  
Let them vanish like water that runs away!

This may be regarded as a very meaningful centre for a poem concerned with God's realization of justice in the world. The 13 word arithmetic centre appears to have been deliberately designed, since it is enveloped by exactly 41 words on either side. The number 41 is the numerical value of two important keywords: צֶדֶק, 'justice', in v. 2 (18 + 4 + 19 = 41) and בְּאֶרֶץ, 'on earth', in vs. 3 and 12b (2 + 1 + 20 + 18 = 41):

vs. 2-6           41 words  
vs. 7-8a         13 words  
vs. 8b-12        41 words.

This cannot possibly be dismissed as a matter of coincidence, particularly in light of the fact that exactly the same compositional device has been used in Psalm 59. There the 5-word arithmetic centre of the poem is enveloped by 69 words, the numerical value of the very first word of the poem, הַצִּילֵנִי, 'Deliver me' (vs. 2a, 3a). See Observation 4 in my Analysis of [Psalm 59](#).

In the 41 words of vs. 8b-12, the *kabod* number 23 in the compositional formula  $41 = 18a + 23b$  appears to have been intentionally devised to symbolize the presence of YHWH through his glory.

2. In terms of the poetical building blocks, the bicolic middle verseline in vs. 7 constitute a shorter meaningful centre ( $5 + 1 + 5$  verselines, and  $10 + 2 + 10$  cola):

אֱלֹהִים הָרֹס־שָׁנִימוּ בְּפִימוּ ^ מִלְתָּעוֹת כְּפִירִים נִתֵן יְהוָה:

God, rip their teeth from their mouths; shatter the fangs of the young lions, YHWH!

This 8-word centre is conspicuously highlighted in two ways: first, by its unique syntactical structure (a.b.c | c'.b'.a'), and second, by a significant demarcating *inclusio*: אֱלֹהִים at the beginning and יְהוָה at the end.

The highlighting function of אֱלֹהִים is supported by the fact that its numerical value, 41 ( $1 + 12 + 5 + 10 + 13$ ), corresponds precisely with that of צֶדֶק and בְּאֶרֶץ. The name יְהוָה highlights the centre by being the only occurrence of the name in the whole poem! The highlighted meaningful centre stands out, since it contains the only words phrased as directly addressed to God.

Note also that the 13-word meaningful centre of the poem on word level, vs. 7-8a, is matched by the 13-word section in vs. 8b-9. The explicit use of the number 13 is underscored by the fact that the 26 words in vs. 7-9, significantly divide precisely into 13 words before, and 13 after atnach. The number 13, the numerical value of 'echad, 'one', symbolically represents the unique position of YHWH in the world.

3. The divine name numbers are woven into the body of the poem in the following way:

vs. 4-5	17 words in total
vs. 7-8	17 words in total
vs. 4-9	51 (3 x 17) words in total, with 26 before atnach
vs. 3-9	34 (2 x 17) words before atnach
vs. 7-9	26 (13 + 13) words in total
vs. 7-10	17 words before atnach
vs. 3-10	68 (4 x 17) words in total
vs. 2-10	34 (2 x 17) words after atnach
vs. 2-11	85 (5 x 17) words in total
vs. 2-12	52 (2 x 26) words before atnach.

4. The name יהוה occurs only in v. 7b; אֱלֹהִים appears twice (vs. 7a and 12b). The word אֱלֹהִים in v. 1a refers to the 'gods' supposed to pronounce just verdicts (cf. Ps. 82:1).

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Dr. C.J. Labuschagne Brinkhorst 44 9751 AT Haren (Gron) The Netherlands <a href="mailto:labuschagne.cj@planet.nl">labuschagne.cj@planet.nl</a>	Senior Lecturer in Semitic Languages (retired), University of Pretoria, South Africa and Professor of Old Testament (retired), University of Groningen, The Netherlands
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