

Psalm 71— 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 71

- Psalm 71 is 'nameless', like 66 and 67, and the only psalm in Book II lacking a heading.
- The meaningful centre, [vs. 12-13](#), which is the 16-word middle strophe, is significantly preceded by **85** (5 x 17) words and followed by **102** (6 x 17) words.
- As in Psalm 69, syntax has been used to generate additional divine name numbers, with altogether **51** (3 x 17) words in the subordinate clauses in both psalms.

Strophic structure - Canto/Stanza boundary: ||

- Van der Lugt: 1-3, 4-6, 7-8 || 9-11, 12-13, 14-16 || 17-18, 19-21, 22-24 (3 cantos with 9 strophes, 25 verselines and 54 cola, taking vs. 20-21 as two bicola).
- Fokkelman: 1-2, 3-4 | 5-6, 7-8 | 9-11, 12-13 || 14-16, 17-18 | 19-20b, 20c-21 | 22, 23-24 (12 strophes with 30 verselines and 66 cola).
- Labuschagne: I concur with Van der Lugt, but find 56 cola, taking vs. 13 and 22 as tricola on account of the *atnachs*.

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	בְּדָֿיִתְּהוּהָ חִסִּיתִי [^] אֶל־אֲבוֹשָׁה לְעוֹלָם: Total, v. 1	1 3	3		3	
		3		3	3	
		6 = 3 + 3 = 6 + 0				
2	בְּצַדִּיקְתָּהּ תִּצְלֵנִי וְתַפְלִטֵנִי [^] הִטָּה־אֵלַי אֲזִנָּה וְהוֹשִׁיעֵנִי: Total, v. 2	2 3	3		3	
		4		4	4	
		7 = 3 + 4 = 7 + 0				
3	הִיָּה לִי לְצוּר מְעוֹן לְבוֹא תִמְיֹד צוּיֹתָ לְהוֹשִׁיעֵנִי [^] כִּי־סִלְעִי וּמְצוּדֹתַי אָתָּה: Total, v. 3	3 6	6		6	
		2	2		2	
		4		4		4
		12 = 8 + 4 = 8 + 4				
	Strophe 1 Total, v. 1-3	25 = 14 + 11 = 21 + 4				
4	אֲלֹהֵי פִלְטָנִי מִיַּד רָשָׁע [^] מִכַּף מְעוֹל וְחוֹמֵץ: Total, v. 4	4 4	4		4	
		3		3	3	
		7 = 4 + 3 = 7 + 0				
5	כִּי־אָתָּה תִקְנֹתֵי [^] אֲדֹנָי יְהוּהָ מִבְּטַחִי מִנְעוּרָי: Total, v. 5	5 3	3			3
		4		4		4
		7 = 3 + 4 = 0 + 7				
6	עֲלִיָּה גִסְמִכְתִּי מִפֶּטֶן מִמְעֵי אֲמִי אָתָּה גּוֹזֵל [^] בְּךָ תִהְיֶה לִּי תִמְיֹד: Total, v. 6	6 3	3		3	
		4	4		4	
		3		3	3	
		10 = 7 + 3 = 10 + 0				
	Strophe 2 Total, v. 4-6	24 = 14 + 10 = 17 + 7				

7	כְּמוֹפֶת תְּיִיתִי לְרַבִּים וְאַתָּה מִחֲסִיעוֹ: Total, v. 7	7	3	3	3		
			3		3	3	
			<hr/>				
			6	=	3	+	3 = 6 + 0
8	יִמְלֵא כִּי תִהְלֶתְךָ כָּל־הַיּוֹם תִּפְאַרְתְּךָ: Total, v. 8	8	3	3	3		
			3		3	3	
			<hr/>				
			6	=	3	+	3 = 6 + 0
	Strophe 3	Total, v. 7-8	<hr/>				
			12	=	6	+	6 = 12 + 0
	Canto I	Total, v. 1-8	<hr/>				
			61	=	34	+	27 = 50 + 11
9	אֶל־תִּשְׁלִיכֵנִי לְעֵת זְקֵנָה בְּכָלוֹת כַּחֲוֵי אֶל־תִּעֲזָבֵנִי: Total, v. 9	9	4	4	4		
			4		4	4	
			<hr/>				
			8	=	4	+	4 = 8 + 0
10	כִּי־אָמְרוּ אוֹיְבֵי לִי וְשָׁמְרֵי נַפְשִׁי נוֹעְצֵי וַיְחַדּוּ: Total, v. 10	10	4	4			4
			4		4		4
			<hr/>				
			8	=	4	+	4 = 0 + 8
11	לֵאמֹר אֱלֹהִים עֲזָבוּ רַדְפוֹ וְתִפְשׂוּהוּ כִּי־אֵין מַצִּיל: Total, v. 11	11	3	3			3
			5		5		5
			<hr/>				
			8	=	3	+	5 = 0 + 8
	Strophe 4	Total, v. 9-11	<hr/>				
			24	=	11	+	13 = 8 + 16
		Total, v. 7-11	<hr/>				
			36	=	17	+	19 = 20 + 16
		Total, v. 1-11	<hr/>				
			85	=	45	+	40 = 58 + 27
12	Middle strophe: 9 = 4 + 1 + 4 Meaningful centre	אֱלֹהִים אֶל־תִּרְחַק מִמֶּנִּי אֱלֹהֵי לְעִזְרָתִי חוֹשָׁה: Total, v. 12	12	4	4	4	
			3		3	3	
			<hr/>				
			7	=	4	+	3 = 7 + 0
13	Middle verseline 25 = 12 + 1 + 12	יִבְשׂוּ וְכָלוּ שִׁטְנֵי נַפְשִׁי יַעֲטוּ חֶרֶף וּכְלָמָה מִבְּקָשֵׁי רַעְתִּי: Total, v. 13	13	4	4	4	
			3		3	3	
			<hr/>				
			9	=	7	+	2 = 9 + 0
		Strophe 5	<hr/>				
		Total, v. 12-13	16	=	11	+	5 = 16 + 0
14	Middle word: 203=101+1+101	וְאֲנִי תָמִיד אֶיְחַלֵּל וְהוֹסַפְתִּי עַל־כָּל־תִּהְלֶתְךָ: Total, v. 14	14	3	3	3	
			4		4	4	
			<hr/>				
			7	=	3	+	4 = 7 + 0
15		כִּי יִסְפֹּר צְדָקָתְךָ כָּל־הַיּוֹם תִּשְׁוַעְתְּךָ כִּי לֹא יִדְעֵתִי סִפְרוֹת: Total, v. 15	15	3	3	3	
			3		3	3	
			<hr/>				
			10	=	6	+	4 = 6 + 4
		Total, v. 14-15	<hr/>				
			17	=	9	+	8 = 13 + 4
16		אָבוֹא בְּגִבְרוֹת אֲדֹנָי יְהוִה אֲזִכִּיר צְדָקָתְךָ לְבִדְךָ: Total, v. 16	16	4	4	4	
			3		3	3	
			<hr/>				
			7	=	4	+	3 = 7 + 0
	Strophe 6	Total, v. 14-16	<hr/>				
			24	=	13	+	11 = 20 + 4
	Canto II	Total, v. 9-16	<hr/>				
			64	=	35	+	29 = 44 + 20

17	אֱלֹהִים לַמִּדְתָּנִי מִנְעוּרֵי [^]	17	3	3	3	
	וְעַד־הַנְּהָה אָנִיד נִפְלְאוֹתֶיךָ :		4		4	4
	Total, v. 17		7	= 3	+ 4	= 7 + 0
18	וְגַם עַד־זִקְנָה וְשִׁיבָה	18	4	4	4	
	אֱלֹהִים אֶל־תַּעֲזֹבֵנִי		3	3	3	
	עַד־אָנִיד זְרוּעֶךָ לְדוֹר [^]	19	4	4	4	
	לְכָל־יְבוּא גְבוּרְתֶךָ :		3		3	3
	Total, v. 18		14	= 11	+ 3	= 14 + 0
	Strophe 7 Total, v. 17-18		21	= 14	+ 7	= 21 + 0
19	וַיִּצְדַּקְתֶּךָ אֱלֹהִים עַד־מְרוֹם	20	4	4	4	
	אֲשֶׁר־עָשִׂיתָ גְדֻלוֹת [^]		3	3	3	3
	אֱלֹהִים מִי כָמוֹךָ :		3		3	3
	Total, v. 19		10	= 7	+ 3	= 7 + 3
	Total, v. 14-19		55	= 34	+ 21	= 48 + 7
	Total, v. 1-19		156	= 90	+ 66	= 122 + 34
20	אֲשֶׁר הִרְאִיתָנִי צְרוֹת רַבּוֹת וְרַעוֹת	21	5	5		5
	תָּשׁוּב תַחֲיִינִי [^] Middle colon of Canto III		2	2		2
	וּמִתְהַמּוֹת הָאָרֶץ תָּשׁוּב תַעֲלֵנִי :	22	4		4	4
21	תָּרַב גְּדֻלָּתִי וְתִסַּב תִּנְחַמְנִי :		4	4		4
	Total, v. 20-21		15	= 11	+ 4	= 10 + 5
	Strophe 8 Total, v. 19-21		25	= 18	+ 7	= 17 + 8
22	גַּם־אָנִי אֹדְדֶךָ בְּכָל־נֶבֶל אֲמַתֶּךָ אֱלֹהֵי	23	7	7	7	
	אֲזַמְרָה לְךָ בְּכַנּוֹר [^]		3	3	3	
	קְדוֹשׁ יִשְׂרָאֵל :		2		2	2
	Total, v. 22:		12	= 10	+ 2	= 12 + 0
23	תִּרְנְנָה שִׁפְתֵי כִי אֲזַמְרָה־לְךָ [^]	24	5	5	2	3
	וּנְפָשִׁי אֲשֶׁר פָּדִיתָ :		3		3	3
	Total, v. 23:		8	= 5	+ 3	= 2 + 6
24	גַּם־לְשׁוֹנִי כָל־הַיּוֹם תִּהְיֶה צִדְקַתֶּךָ [^]	25	6	6	6	
	כִּי־בָשׁוּ כִי־חָפְרוּ מִבִּקְשֵׁי רַעְתִּי :		6		6	6
	Total, v. 24:		12	= 6	+ 6	= 6 + 6
	Strophe 9 Total, v. 22-24:		32	= 21	+ 11	= 20 + 12
	Total, v. 20-24:		47	= 32	+ 15	= 30 + 17
	Canto III Total, v. 17-24:		78	= 53	+ 25	= 58 + 20
	Total, v. 14-24:		102	= 66	+ 36	= 78 + 24
	Total, v. 9-24:		142	= 88	+ 54	= 102 + 40
	Total, v. 1-24:		203	= 122	+ 81	= 152 + 51

Observations

1. Like its predecessor, Psalm 71 does not have a meaningful centre on word level. The middle word, וְאֲנִי, 'and I' (v. 14), is not very meaningful ($203 = 101 + 1 + 101$), but in terms of the 25 verselines, v. 13, the middle verseline, would be a plausible candidate ($25 = 12 + 1 + 12$):

יִבְשׁוּ וְיָכְלוּ שִׁטְנֵי נַפְשִׁי יַעֲטוּ חָרְפָּה וּכְלָמָה ^ מִבְּקָשֵׁי רָעָתִי

Let my accusers be put to shame and perish;

With scorn and dishonour may they be covered // who seek my hurt.

If we follow Van der Lugt, who finds 25 verselines and 54 cola, his middle verseline would coincide with the 2 middle cola, which would be flanked by **26** cola on each side ($54 = 26 + 2 + 26$). However, in my opinion, there are 56 cola, because I take the *atnachs* in vs. 13 and 22 into account and regard these verses as tricola, not bicola.

On logotechnical grounds, the consciously designed meaningful centre, is to be found on the level of strophes: the middle strophe, vs. 12-13 ($9 = 4 + 1 + 4$) comprising the entire prayer for help (compare the meaningful centre of [Psalm 70!](#)):

אֱלֹהִים אֶל־תִּרְחַק מִמֶּנִּי ^ אֱלֹהֵי לְעֹזְרָתִי חוֹשָׁה: ¹²

יִבְשׁוּ וְיָכְלוּ שִׁטְנֵי נַפְשִׁי יַעֲטוּ חָרְפָּה וּכְלָמָה ^ מִבְּקָשֵׁי רָעָתִי ¹³

¹²God, be not far from me // my God, make haste to help me!

¹³Let my accusers be put to shame and perish;

With scorn and dishonour may they be covered // who seek my hurt.

In terms of words, the 16-word meaningful centre is flanked by multiples of the divine name number **17** in the following way, which is obviously a matter of authorial intent:

vs. 1-11	4 strophes (1-3, 4-6, 7-8, 9-11)	85 (5 x 17) words
vs. 12-13	1 strophe (12-13)	16 words
vs. 14-24	4 strophes (14-16, 17-18, 19-21, 22-24)	102 (6 x 17) words.

This striking numerical structure overlies - but does not exclude – the division of the text into 3 cantos consisting of 3 strophes each: Canto I (vs. 1-8), Canto II (vs. 9-16), Canto III (vs. 17-24).

2. As in quite a number of psalms, especially in Psalm 69, the syntactical categories 'main clause' and 'subordinate clause' have been used to generate additional divine name numbers – see the General Introduction "Criteria for logotechnical analysis". It is intriguing to note that both Psalm 69 and 71 have **51** (3 x **17**) words in the subordinate clauses. This may suggest that the two psalms stem from the same hand, but for some reason Psalm 71 was not labelled a Davidic psalm. The reason may be the fact that the 18 Davidic psalms in Book II have altogether **289** (17 x **17**) verselines! Compare the Introduction to Book II, p. 2.

vs. 4-6	17 words in the main clauses
vs. 1-19	34 (2 x 17) words in the subordinate clauses
vs. 17-20	34 (2 x 17) words in the main clauses
vs. 19-21	17 words in the main clauses
vs. 20-24	17 words in the subordinate clauses
vs. 14-24	78 (3 x 26) words in the main clauses
vs. 9-24	102 (6 x 17) words in the main clauses
vs. 1-24	51 (3 x 17) words in the subordinate clauses.

Particularly striking is the use of **156** (6 x **26**) words in vs. 1-19, which creates a 'numerical caesura' between vs. 19 and 20 within Strophe 8 (vs. 1-19b with **153** (9 x **17**) words, and 19c with **3** words). This can be explained as a scribal device to focus special attention on the concluding colon (v. 19c in box) at the end of vs. 1-19:

אֱלֹהִים מִי כָמוֹךָ, 'God, who is like you?'

This rhetorical question is theologically of fundamental importance: it draws attention to YHWH's incomparability based on his great, powerful, righteous deeds.

3. Additionally, the divine name numbers feature in the following instances:

vs. 1-8	34 (2 x 17) words before atnach
vs. 7-11	17 words before atnach
vs. 1-11	85 (5 x 17) words in total
vs. 14-15	17 words in total
vs. 14-19	34 (2 x 17) words before atnach
vs. 1-19	156 (6 x 26) words in total
vs. 17-24	78 (3 x 26) words in total
vs. 14-24	102 (6 x 17) words in total.

4. The designation אֱלֹהִים occurs 9 times, while the name יְהוָה features only 3 times, twice preceded by אֲדֹנָי (vs. 5 and 16).

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