

Psalm 72— 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 72

- Psalm 72, which concludes the corpus of 31 psalms in Book II, is a classic example of skilful compositional craftsmanship. The psalm proper, vs. 1-17, has a particularly regular poetic structure in terms of strophes, verselines and cola - see Observation 5.
- The secondarily added doxology (vs. 18-19) has numerically been fused with the body of the psalm to form a larger unity consisting of exactly **156** (6 x 26) words.
- Particularly skilful is the use of divine name numbers, not only to structure the text, but also to highlight the effects of justice realized by the king, and the flourishing of righteousness, specifically for the oppressed.

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

- Van der Lugt rightly excludes the doxology and subscription: 1-2, 3-4 | 5-6, 7-8 || 9, 10, 11 || 12-13, 14-15 | 16, 17 (3 cantos with 11 strophes, 20 verselines and 42 cola).
- Fokkelman includes the doxology, but excludes the two *amens* at the end of v. 19, as well as the subscription (v. 20): 1-2, 3-4 || 5-6, 7-8 || 9-11, 12-14 || 15-16, 17, 18-19 (4 stanzas with 9 strophes, 21 verselines and 44 cola, taking v. 10 as a single bicolic verseline and vs. 18-19 as part of the body of the poem).
- Labuschagne: I differentiate between the psalm without the doxology (vs. 1-17), and with it, (vs. 1-19): 1-2, 3-4 | 5-6, 7-8 || 9, 10, 11 || 12-14, 15 | 16, 17 (the psalm proper has 3 cantos with 11 strophes, 20 verselines and 42 cola).

Logotechnical analysis

- Columns **a** and **b** show the number of words before and after the atnach.
- Column **c**: words describing the king's blessed rule of justice and its *internal effects*;
- Column **d**: words describing the effects of the *external repercussions* for the king.
- The numbering of the verselines is shown in **brown**.

		Total	a	b	c	d
1	לְשִׁלְמָה Heading	1	= 1	+ 0		
	אֱלֹהִים מְשַׁפְּטֵיךָ לְמֶלֶךְ תֹּאן	1	4	4	4	
	וְצַדִּיקְתֶּךָ לְבֵן־מֶלֶךְ:	3		3	3	
2	יָדִין עַמֶּךָ בְּצִדְקָה	2	3	3	3	
	וְעֲנִיֶיךָ בְּמִשְׁפָּט:	2		2	2	
	Strophe 1 Total, v. 1-2	12	= 7	+ 5	= 12	+ 0
3	יִשְׂאוּ הַרִים שְׁלוֹם לְעַם	3	4	4	4	
	וְנִבְעוֹת בְּצִדְקָה:	2		2	2	
	Total, v. 3	6	= 4	+ 2	= 6	+ 0
4	יִשְׁפֹּט עֲנִיִּים	4	3	3	3	
	יִוְשִׁיעַ לְבְנֵי אֲבִיוֹן	3	3	3	3	
	וְיִדְכָּא עוֹשֵׂק:	2		2	2	
	Total, v. 4	8	= 6	+ 2	= 8	+ 0
	Strophe 2 Total, v. 3-4	14	= 10	+ 4	= 14	+ 0
	Canticle I.1 Total, v. 1-4	26	= 17	+ 9	= 26	+ 0

5	יִירָאוּךָ עִם־שִׁמְשֵׁהָ	5	3	3	3	
	וְלִפְנֵי יְרַח הַדּוֹר הַדּוֹרִים:		4	4	4	
	Total, v. 5		7	= 3 + 4	= 7	+ 0
6	יֵרֵד כְּמַטֵּר עַל־גֹּזֵהָ	6	4	4	4	
	כְּרִבִּיבִים זְרוֹיֵף אֶרֶץ:		3	3	3	
	Total, v. 6		7	= 4 + 3	= 7	+ 0
	Strophe 3 Total, v. 5-6		14	= 7 + 7	= 14	+ 0
7	יִפְרַח בְּיָמָיו צְדִיקָה	7	3	3	3	
	וְרֵב שְׁלוֹם עַד־בְּלֵי יְרַח:		5	5	5	
	Total, v. 7		8	= 3 + 5	= 8	+ 0
8	וַיֵּרֵד מַיִם עַד־יָם	8	4	4	4	
	וּמִנְהַר עַד־אֶפְסַי־אֶרֶץ:		4	4	4	
	Total, v. 8		8	= 4 + 4	= 8	+ 0
	Strophe 4 Total, v. 7-8		16	= 7 + 9	= 16	+ 0
	Canticle I.2 Total, v. 5-8		30	= 14 + 16	= 30	+ 0
	Canto I Total, v. 1-8		56	= 31 + 25	= 56	+ 0
9	לִפְנֵינוּ יִכְרְעוּ צִיִּים	9	3	3	3	
	וְאֵיבֵינוּ עֶפֶר יִלְחֲכוּ:		3	3	3	
	Meaningful centre		6	= 3 + 3	= 0	+ 6
	Strophe 5 Total, v. 9		6	= 3 + 3	= 0	+ 6
10	מֶלֶכִי תִרְשִׁישׁ וְאֵיִם	10	3	3	3	
	Middle strophe: 5+1+5		2	2	2	
	Middle cola: 42=19+4+19		2	2	2	
	Middle word: 137=68+1+68		3	3	3	
	אֲשֶׁכֶּר יִקְרִיבוּ:	11	2	2	2	
	Strophe 6 Total, v. 10		10	= 5 + 5	= 0	+ 10
11	וַיִּשְׁתַּחֲוּוּ לּוֹ כָּל־מַלְכִים	12	4	4	4	
	כָּל־גּוֹיִם יַעֲבֹדוּהוּ:		3	3	3	
	Strophe 7 Total, v. 11		7	= 4 + 3	= 0	+ 7
	Total, v. 10-11		17	= 9 + 8	= 0	+ 17
	Canto II Total, v. 9-11		23	= 12 + 11	= 0	+ 23
	Total, v. 5-11		53	= 26 + 27	= 30	+ 23
	Total, v. 1-11		79	= 43 + 36	= 56	+ 23
12	כִּי־יֵצֵא אֲבִיוֹן מִשְׁנַעַה	13	4	4	4	
	וְעָנִי וְאִין־עוֹר לוֹ:		4	4	4	
	Total, v. 12		8	= 4 + 4	= 8	+ 0
13	יָחַס עַל־דָּל וְאֲבִיוֹן	14	4	4	4	
	וּנְפֹשׁוֹת אֲבִיוֹנִים יוֹשִׁיעַ:		3	3	3	
	Total, v. 13		7	= 4 + 3	= 7	+ 0
14	מִתּוֹדָה וּמִחֶמֶס יִגְאֵל נַפְשָׁם	15	4	4	4	
	וַיִּיקֶר דָּמָם בְּעֵינָיו:		3	3	3	
	Total, v. 14		7	= 4 + 3	= 7	+ 0
	Strophe 8 Total, v. 12-14		22	= 12 + 10	= 22	+ 0
	Total, v. 9-14		45	= 24 + 21	= 22	+ 23
	Total, v. 5-8+12-14		52	= 26 + 26	= 52	+ 0
	Total 2-14		94	= 51 + 43	= 71	+ 23
	Total, v. 1-14		101	= 55 + 46	= 78	+ 23

15	וַיְחִי וַיִּתֶּן-לּוֹ מִזֶּה־בְּשָׂבָא	16	5	5	5
	וַיִּתְפַּלֵּל בְּעֵדוֹ תְּמִידָא		3	3	3
	כָּל-הַיּוֹם יִבְרַכְנָהוּ:		3	3	3
	Strophe 9 Total, v. 15		11	= 8 + 3 = 0 + 11	
	Canticle III.1 Total, v. 12-15		33	= 20 + 13 = 22 + 11	
	Total, v. 9-15		56	= 32 + 24 = 22 + 34	
	Total, v. 2-15		105	= 59 + 46 = 71 + 34	
	Total, v. 1-15		112	= 63 + 49 = 78 + 34	
16	יְהִי פֶסֶת-בַּר בְּאֶרֶץ	17	4	4	4
	בְּרֵאשׁ הָרִים		2	2	2
	וַיַּרְעֵשׂ כָּל-בְּנוֹן פְּרִיָּא	18	3	3	3
	וַיַּצִּיצוּ מֵעִיר כְּעֵשֶׂב הָאֶרֶץ:		4	4	4
	Strophe 10 Total, v. 16		13	= 9 + 4 = 0 + 13	
	Total, v. 15-16		24	= 17 + 7 = 0 + 24	
17	יְהִי שְׁמוֹ לְעוֹלָם	19	3	3	3
	לְפָנֵי-שָׁמֶשׁ יְנוֹן שְׁמוֹ		4	4	4
	וַיִּתְבָּרְכוּ בוֹ	20	2	2	2
	כָּל-גּוֹיִם יֵאָשְׁרוּהוּ:		3	3	3
	Strophe 11 Total, v. 17		12	= 9 + 3 = 0 + 12	
	Canticle III.2 Total, v. 16-17		25	= 18 + 7 = 25 + 0	
	Total, v. 15-17		36	= 26 + 10 = 0 + 36	
	Canto III Total, v. 12-17		58	= 38 + 20 = 22 + 36	
	Total, v. 2-17		130	= 77 + 53 = 71 + 59	
	Numerical v. 1-8		56	= 31 + 25 = 56 + 0	
	Chiasmus v. 9-17		81	= 50 + 31 = 22 + 59	
	Psalm proper, v. 1-17		137	= 81 + 56 = 78 + 59	
	With the heading, v. 1-17		138	= 82 + 56	
Doxology, the coda concluding Book II					
18	בְּרוּךְ יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל	(21)	5	5	5
	עֹשֶׂה נִפְלְאוֹת לְבָדוֹ:		3	3	3
19	וּבְרוּךְ שֵׁם כְּבוֹדוֹ לְעוֹלָם	(22)	4	4	4
	וַיִּמְלֵא כְבוֹדוֹ אֶת-כָּל הָאֶרֶץ		5	5	5
	Doxology, v. 18-19*		17	= 14 + 3 = 0 + 17	
	אָמֵן וְאָמֵן:		2	2	2
	Doxology including the <i>amens</i> , v. 18-19		19	= 16 + 3 = 0 + 19	
	Total, v. 5-19		130	= 80 + 50 = 52 + 78	
	Psalm proper and doxology, v. 1-19		156	= 97 + 59 = 78 + 78	
	With the heading, v. 1-19		157	= 98 + 59	
20	כָּלֹ תַפְלוֹתָ		2	2	
	דָּוִד בְּנֵי-יִשְׂרָאֵל:		3	3	
	Subscription, v. 20		5	= 2 + 3	
	Total, including the subscription, v. 1-20		161	= 99 + 62	
	With the heading, v. 1-20		162	= 100 + 62	

Observations

1. The psalm proper consists of **17** Masoretic verses, made up of 11 strophes, 20 verselines, 42 cola, and 137 words. The doxology of Book II in vs. 18-19 should be regarded, in my opinion – like the other doxologies elsewhere in the Psalter - as editorial material, added secondarily during the formation process of the Psalter. It is important to note, however, that this was not done in any haphazard fashion; the doxology was composed in such a way that it forms a numerical unity with the psalm proper. This goes for the doxology of Book I too. See Observations 1 and 5 in my Analysis of [Psalm 41](#).

The **17**-word doxology, together with its 2-word conclusion, אָמֵן אָמֵן, 'Amen, Amen', (vs. 18-19), brings the total number of words of the entire poem up to **156** (6 x **26**), which was obviously consciously designed. The numerical structure shows that the 1-word heading and the 5-word editorial note (v. 20) do not play any role at all in the numerical structure of the psalm.

2. In terms of the 137 words of the psalm proper, the middle word is שֶׁבַע, 'Sheba', significantly flanked by **68** (4 x **17**) words: $137 = 68 + 1 + 68$. The name Sheba appears to have been intentionally devised as the meaningful centre of the poem on word level. The name Sheba may be regarded as representing all foreign rulers who are familiar with Solomon's fame and acknowledge his hegemonic rule. The name Sheba is a most fitting meaningful centre for a poem dedicated to king Solomon, especially in light of the story about the visit by the queen of Sheba (I Kings 10:1-13).

It is particularly interesting to note that the concentric compositional formula, with Sheba flanked by **68** words (4x the divine name number **17**) on each side, seems to suggest that Sheba is symbolically enveloped by YHWH's name. This may be linked with the remark in I Kings 10:1 that "the queen of Sheba heard of the fame of Solomon *concerning the name of YHWH*". The Deuteronomistic storyteller, on his part, wanted to stress that the reason for her visit is not Solomon's personal fame, but the fame of what he did for *the name of YHWH*, i.e. building the temple.

Significantly enough, however, the poet winds up his poem by referring solely to the name of *Solomon*, without any explicit mentioning of the name of YHWH:

"May his name endure for ever; may his fame remain like the sun!" (v. 17).

So it does not come as a surprize to see that the author of the doxology corrected the poem's one-sided picture of Solomon - perfectly in line with the view of the storyteller - by referring specifically to the name of *YHWH* (vs. 18-19):

"Blessed be YHWH, the God of Israel, who alone does wondrous things; blessed be his glorious name for ever; may his glory fill the whole earth!".

In my opinion, there is every reason to conclude that the doxology was secondarily composed by a redactor in the editorial phase of the formation process of the Psalter.

3. In terms of the poetical structure of the poem, there is another meaningful centre, namely **v. 10**, the middle strophe (11 = 5 + **1** + 5), which coincides with the 4 middle cola (42 = 19 + **4** + 19). This 2-verseline middle strophe (in box) is highlighted by the fact that it is flanked by the two only 1-verseline strophes in the whole psalm. They are very similar in terms of content: the submission of the king's enemies and their recognition of Solomon's hegemonic rule.

This is how the middle strophe is positioned within the middle canto which may be regarded as the larger meaningful centre:

לִפְנֵי יִכְרְעוּ צַיִים ^ וְאִיְבוּ עָפָר יִלְחֲכוּ: ⁹ (one bicolic verseline)

מַלְכֵי תַרְשִׁישׁ וְאִיִּים // מִנְחָה יָשִׁיבוּ ¹⁰ two bicolic

מַלְכֵי שֶׁבָא וְסֶבָא // אֲשֶׁר יִקְרִיבוּ: verselines

וְיִשְׁתַּחֲוּוּ-לוֹ כָּל-מְלָכִים ^ כָּל-גּוֹיִם יַעֲבֹדוּהוּ: ¹¹ (one bicolic verseline)

9 May desert tribes bow down before him; and may his enemies lick the dust!

10 May the kings of Tarshish and of the isles render him tribute

May the kings of **Sheba** and Seba bring gifts!

11 May all kings fall down before him; may all nations serve him!

In the wider context, the meaningful centre, **Canto II**, is flanked by the two passages describing *the internal effects* of the realization of justice by the king: preceded by **Canto I** (vs. 1-8) and **Strophe 8** (vs. 12-14). The two Canticles, vs. 1-4 and 5-8 should be clearly distinguished: **Canticle I.1**, which is significantly composed of 26 words (17 before and 9 after *atnach*), is introduced by a *prayer* (vs. 1-2), while **Canticle I.2** is introduced by words referring to God in 2nd person (v. 5): 'may they (the king and his dynasty) revere *you* (God)...'. Another point of difference is that **Canticle I.1** deals with the wishes for the righteous deeds of the king for the benefit of *the people*, while **Canticle I.2** express the wishes for the blessed effects of the rule of justice for the benefit of *the king and his land*.

In the same way, I differentiate between **Strophe 8** (vs. 12-14) and Strophes 9 -11 (vs. 15-17), because **Strophe 8** is a recapitulation of the wishes concerning the saving acts of the king mentioned in vs. 1-4, particularly for the benefit of *the oppressed and the poor*, while Strophes 9 –11 contain a recapitulation of the wishes for the blessed effects of his righteous rule referred to in vs. 5-8, particularly for the benefit of *the king and his land*.

From a numerical point of view, it is important to note that the two passages immediately before and after the meaningful centre, vs. 5-8 and vs. 12-14, taken together, are composed of 52 words, with 26 before and 26 after *atnach*, matching the 26 words in vs. 1-4!

In other words, the text is constructed in such a way that we can visualize the submission of the enemies of the king (vs. 9-11) strictly within the context of his realization of justice in general. The rule of justice does not only benefit the king and his land, but also, more particularly, the oppressed and the needy. I consider this a theological insight of fundamental importance.

vs. 1-4	the king's deeds for the benefit of <i>the people</i>	26
vs. 5-8	the blessings for <i>the king and his land</i>	30
vs. 9-11	the submission of the king's enemies	23
vs. 12-14	the flourishing of justice for <i>the oppressed</i>	22
vs. 15-17	the blessings for <i>the king and his land</i>	36
vs. 1-17	the entire psalm proper:	137 = 59 + 52 + 26

4. A closer examination of the central position of the meaningful central canto, vs. 9-11, reveals the following: the middle canto, is made up of 8 cola, flanked by 17 on each side: $42 = 17 + 8 + 17!$ Moreover, it coincides with the 3 middle strophes and the 4 middle verselines, highlighting its pivotal position. In sum, the poem is structured in a very regular fashion:

vs. 1-8	Canto I	4 strophes	8	lines	17 cola
vs. 9,10,11	Canto II	1+1+1 strophes	1+2+1	lines	8 cola
vs. 12-17	Canto III	4 strophes	8	lines	17 cola

5. When I began analyzing the poem, it appeared that neither syntax nor the 2nd and 3rd person forms of address were used to give structure to the text, as in many other psalms. Ultimately, however, I discovered that the description of the *internal effects* of justice realized by the king *for the people of Israel*, on the one hand, and the description of the *external effects* of his righteous rule in the outside world *for the king*, on the other, have been used to structure the text numerically: **78** (3 x **26**) words in Column c and **59** words in Column d.

It is intriguing to note that the redactor/editor responsible for the doxology used exactly **19** words to compose the coda to Book II. This brought the **59** words describing the *external effects* up to precisely **78** (3 x **26**), which is in perfect balance with the **78** (3 x **26**) words used for the description of the *internal effects*. Obviously, to his mind, the universal praise of God's name and glory in 'all the earth', expressed in the doxology, ensues from the realization of justice by the king, which means that it belongs to the *external effects*.

6. In addition to the considerable number of instances mentioned above, the divine name numbers feature in the psalm in the following way:

vs. 1-4	26 words in total, with 17 words before atnach
vs.10-11	17 words in total
vs. 5-11	26 words before atnach
vs. 5-14	52 (2 x 26) words in Column c
vs. 2-14	51 (3 x 17) words before atnach
vs. 1-15	34 (2 x 17) words in Column d
vs. 1-15	78 (3 x 26) words in Column c
vs. 15-16	17 words before atnach
vs. 15-17	26 words before atnach
vs. 2-17	130 (5 x 26) words in total
vs. 5-19	130 (5 x 26) words, with 52 in Column c and 78 in Column d
vs. 1-19	156 (6 x 26) words, with 78 in Column c and 78 in Column d.

7. The name יהוה itself occurs only once: in the doxology. This single instance brings the total number of occurrences of the divine name in Book II up to **34** (**17** times in Psalms 42-59, and **17** times in Psalms 60-72). For particulars, see the Introduction to [Book II](#), Table V, Observation 4. The designation אֱלֹהִים occurs three times: 1x in the psalm proper (v. 1a), and 2x in the doxology (v. 18a).

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