

Psalm 73— Logotechnical Analysis

Guidelines

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

Specific features of Psalm 73

- Psalm 73 opens the self-contained sub-group of 11 Asaphite psalms (73-83), the main component of the 17 psalms in Book III.
- The direction of address is used to divide the poem into two major sections, which coincide with the division based on the idea of *far-off* from, and *nearby* God:
 - Canto I** (vs. 1-17), phrased in 3rd person form, describes the *far-from-God-situation* before the confrontation with him in the sanctuary;
 - Canto II** (vs. 18-28), mainly in 2nd person form, deals with the *near-God-situation* after the confrontation. The divine name numbers underscore this division of the text.
- A feature Psalm 73 shares with Psalm 74 and a number of other psalms, e.g., 55, 56 and 57, is the two additional meaningful centres, in each of the two cantos: **v. 9** and **v. 23**.
- The text is logotechnically arranged in such a way that the YHWH *echad* formula is achieved twice (**vs. 2-7** and **vs. 17-22**) and the *kebod*-YHWH formula once (**vs. 18-26**); they express symbolically the presence of the One and Only God.

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

- Van der Lugt: 1, 2-3, 4-5, 6-7 | 8-9, 10-11 || 12, 13-14, 15-16 | 17-18, 19-20, 21-22 || 23-24, 25-26, 27-28 (3 cantos with 4 canticles, 15 strophes, 28 verselines and 57 cola).
- Fokkelman: 1-3, 4-5, 6-7 || 8-9, 10-12 || 13-14, 15-17 || 18-20, 21-22 || 23-24, 25-26, 27-28 (5 stanzas with 12 strophes, 28 verselines and 58 cola, taking v. 26 as a tricolon).
- Labuschagne: 1, 2-3, 4-5, 6-7, 8-9 | 10-12, 13-14, 15-17 || 18-20, 21-22 | 23-24, 25-26, 27-28 (2 cantos with 4 canticles, 13 strophes, 28 verselines and 57 cola).

Logotechnical analysis

- Columns **a** and **b** show the number of words before and after the atnach.
- Column **c**: words addressed to God close by; **d**: words remotely spoken about God.
- Numbering of the verselines in brown.

		Total	a	b	c	d
1	מְזֹמֵר לְאַסָּף Heading, v. 1	2	2			
	אֵךְ טוֹב לְיִשְׂרָאֵל אֱלֹהִים לְבָרִי לְקָב: 1	4	4			4
	Strophe 1 Total, v. 1	6	= 6	+ 0	= 0	+ 6
2	וְאֲנִי כַמְעַט נִטְוִי רַגְלִי כְּאֵין שָׁכְנוּ אֲשֶׁרִי: 2	4	4			4
	Total, v. 2	7	= 4	+ 3	= 0	+ 7
3	כִּי־קִנְאתִי בְהוֹלְלִים שְׁלוֹם רַשְׁעִים אֲרָאָה: 3	3	3			3
	Total, v. 3	6	= 3	+ 3	= 0	+ 6
	Strophe 2 Total, v. 2-3	13	= 7	+ 6	= 0	+ 13

4*	כי אין תרצבות למוֹתָם תָם וּבְרִיא אוֹלָם: Total, v. 4	4	4	4	4	$\frac{2}{3}$	$\frac{2}{3}$	$\frac{2}{3}$	$\frac{2}{3}$
						$\frac{6}{7} =$	$\frac{6}{7}$	$+$	$0 = 0 + \frac{6}{7}$
5	בַּעֲמַל אָנוּשׁ אֵינְמוּיָא וְעַם-אָדָם לֹא יִנָּעוּ: Total, v. 5	5	3	3	3	4	4	4	4
						7 =	3 +	4 =	0 + 7
	Strophe 3 Total, v. 4-5					$\frac{13}{14} =$	$\frac{9}{10}$	$+$	$4 = 0 + \frac{13}{14}$
	Total, v. 2-5					$\frac{26}{27} =$	$\frac{16}{17}$	$+$	$10 = 0 + \frac{26}{27}$
	Total, v. 1-5					$\frac{32}{33} =$	$\frac{22}{23}$	$+$	$10 = 0 + \frac{26}{27}$
6	לְכֵן עֲנַקְתָּמוּ גְאֻהָא יַעֲטַף-שִׁית חָמָס לְמוֹ: Total, v. 6	6	3	3	3	4	4	4	4
						7 =	3 +	4 =	0 + 7
7	יֵצֵא מִחֶלֶב עֵינְמוּיָא עֲבְרוּ מִשְׁכִּיּוֹת לְכָב: Total, v. 7	7	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
						6 =	3 +	3 =	0 + 6
	Strophe 4 Total, v. 6-7					13 =	6 +	7 =	0 + 13
	Total, v. 2-7					$\frac{39}{40} =$	$\frac{22}{23}$	$+$	$17 = 0 + \frac{39}{40}$
	Total, v. 1-7					$\frac{45}{46} =$	$\frac{28}{29}$	$+$	$17 = 0 + \frac{45}{46}$
8	יִמְקוּ וַיִּדְבְּרוּ בְרַע עֲשָׂקָא מִמָּרוּם יִדְבְּרוּ: Total, v. 8	8	4	4	4	2	2	2	2
						6 =	4 +	2 =	0 + 6
9	Middle verseline of Canto I: 17=8+1+8	9	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
	שְׁתוּ בְשִׁמְיֵם פִּיֵּהֶם וּלְשׁוֹנָם תִּתְּלֵךְ בְּאַרְצָא: Total, v. 9					6 =	3 +	3 =	0 + 6
	Strophe 5 Total, v. 8-9					12 =	7 +	5 =	0 + 12
	Total, v. 6-9					$\frac{38}{39} =$	$\frac{22}{23}$	$+$	$16 = 0 + \frac{38}{39}$
	Total, v. 2-9					$\frac{51}{52} =$	$\frac{29}{30}$	$+$	$22 = 0 + \frac{51}{52}$
	Canticle I.1 Total, v. 1-9					$\frac{57}{58} =$	$\frac{35}{36}$	$+$	$22 = 0 + \frac{57}{58}$
10	לְכֵן יֵשׁוּב עִמּוֹ הַלָּם וּמִי מָלֵא יִמְצוּ לְמוֹ: Total, v. 10	10	4	4	4	4	4	4	4
						8 =	4 +	4 =	0 + 8
11	וְאִמְרוּ אִיכָה יִדַע-אַלֵּא וַיֵּשׁ דְּעָה בְּעֵלְיוֹן: Total, v. 11	11	4	4	4	3	3	3	3
						7 =	4 +	3 =	0 + 7
12	הִנֵּה-אַלֵּה רְשָׁעִים וְשִׁלְוֵי עוֹלָם הַשְּׁנוּ-תִּיל: Total, v. 12	12	3	3	3	4	4	4	4
						7 =	3 +	4 =	0 + 7
	Strophe 6 Total, v. 10-12					22 =	11 +	11 =	0 + 22
	Total, v. 8-12					34 =	18 +	16 =	0 + 34

13	אֶדְרִיק זְכִיתִי לְבָבִי וְאֶרְחֵץ בְּנִקְיוֹן כַּפָּי: Total, v. 13	13	4	4		4
			3		3	3
			7	= 4 + 3	= 0 + 7	
14	Middle verselines: וְאֶהֱי נְנוּעַ כָּל־הַיּוֹם וְתוֹכַחְתִּי לַבְּקָרִים: Meaningful centre Total, v. 14	14	4	4		4
	28 = 13 + 2 + 13		2		2	2
			6	= 4 + 2	= 0 + 6	
15*	Middle word: אִם־אָמַרְתִּי אֶסְפְּרָה כְּמוֹ הַנֵּה דוֹר בְּנוֹךְ בְּגֵדְתִי: Middle colon: 57 = 28 + 1 + 28 Strophe 7 Total, v. 13-15	15	4	4		4
	191 = 95 + 1 + 95		4		4	4
			8	= 4 + 4	= 0 + 8	
			21	= 12 + 9	= 0 + 21	
16	וְאֶחְשָׁבָה לְדַעַת זֹאתִי עָמַל הוּא בְּעֵינַי: Total, v. 16 Total, v. 12-16	16	3	3		3
			3		3	3
			6	= 3 + 3	= 0 + 6	
			34	= 18 + 16	= 0 + 34	
17	עַד־אָבוּא אֶל־מִקְדְּשֵׁי־אֱלֹהִים אֶבְיִנָּה לְאַחֲרֵיהֶם: Total, v. 17 Strophe 8 Total, v. 16-17 Total, v. 13-17 Canticle I.2 Total, v. 10-17 Total, v. 8-17 Canto I Total, v. 1-17	17	5	5		5
			2		2	2
			7	= 5 + 2	= 0 + 7	
			13	= 8 + 5	= 0 + 13	
			34	= 20 + 14	= 0 + 34	
			56	= 31 + 25	= 0 + 56	
			68	= 38 + 30	= 0 + 68	
			113/114	= 66/67 + 47	= 0 + 113/114	
18	אֶדְ בַחֲלָקוֹת תְּשִׁית לְמוֹ הַפְּלָתָם לְמִשְׁוֹאוֹת: Total, v. 18 Total, v. 17-18	18	4	4		4
			2		2	2
			6	= 4 + 2	= 6 + 0	
			13	= 9 + 4	= 6 + 7	
19	אִידֵךְ הָיוּ לְשִׁמָּה כְּרַנְעָה סָפוּ תִּמּוֹ מִן־בְּלֵהוֹת: Total, v. 19	19	4	4		4
			4		4	4
			8	= 4 + 4	= 8 + 0	
20	כַּחֲלוֹם מִהֶקִּיץ אֲדַנִּי בְּעִיר צֶלְמָם תִּבְזֶה: Total, v. 20 Strophe 9 Total, v. 18-20	20	2	2		2
			4		4	4
			6	= 2 + 4	= 6 + 0	
			20	= 10 + 10	= 20 + 0	
21	כִּי יִתְחַמֵּץ לְבָבִי וּכְלִיֹּתִי אֶשְׁתַּוְּנֶן: Total, v. 21	21	3	3		3
			2		2	2
			5	= 3 + 2	= 5 + 0	
22	וְאֶנִּי־בְעֵר וְלֹא אֶדְעָה בְּהִמּוֹת הָיִיתִי עִמָּךְ: Total, v. 22 Strophe 10 Total, v. 21-22 Total, v. 19-22 Canticle II.1 Total, v. 18-22 Total, v. 17-22	22	4	4		4
			3		3	3
			7	= 4 + 3	= 7 + 0	
			12	= 7 + 5	= 12 + 0	
			26	= 13 + 13	= 26 + 0	
			32	= 17 + 15	= 32 + 0	
			39	= 22 + 17	= 32 + 7	

23	Middle verseline of Canto II: 11=5+1+5	וַאֲנִי תַמִּיד עֲמָדָה אַחֲזֶתָהּ בְּגִדֵי־מִינִי: Total, v. 23	23	3	3	3	3
				3		3	3
				6	= 3 + 3	= 6	+ 0
24		בַּעֲצָתָהּ תִּנְחַנְיָהּ וְאַחַר כְּבוֹד תִּקְחֶנִּי: Total, v. 24	24	2	2	2	2
				3		3	3
				5	= 2 + 3	= 5	+ 0
	Strophe 11	Total, v. 23-24		11	= 5 + 6	= 11	+ 0
25		מִי־לִי בְשָׁמַיִם וְעַמָּה לֹא־תִפְצְתִי בְּאֶרֶץ: Total, v. 25	25	3	3	3	3
				4		4	4
				7	= 3 + 4	= 7	+ 0
		Total, v. 18-25		50	= 25 + 25	= 50	+ 0
26		כָּל־הָ שְׂאֵרֵי וְלִבִּי צוּר־לִבִּי וְחִלְקֵי אֱלֹהִים לְעוֹלָם: Total, v. 26	26	3	3		3
				5		5	5
				8	= 8 + 0	= 0	+ 8
	Strophe 12	Total, v. 25-26		15	= 11 + 4	= 7	+ 8
		Total, v. 23-26		26	= 16 + 10	= 18	+ 8
		Total, v. 18-26		58	= 33 + 25	= 50	+ 8
27		כִּי־הִנֵּה רָחֵקֶיךָ יֹאבְדוּ הַצְּמִתָּהּ כָּל־זוֹנֶה מִמֶּךָ: Total, v. 27	27	4	4	4	4
				4		4	4
				8	= 4 + 4	= 8	+ 0
		Total, v. 23-27		34	= 20 + 14	= 26	+ 8
		Total, v. 21-27		46	= 27 + 19	= 38	+ 8
		Total, v. 18-27		66	= 37 + 29	= 58	+ 8
28	Coda	וַאֲנִי קִרְבַּת אֱלֹהִים לִי־טוֹב שְׁתִּי בְּאֶרֶץ יְהוָה מִחֶסֶי לְסַפֵּר כָּל־מַלְאכֹתֶיךָ: Total, v. 28	28	5	5		5
				4		4	4
				3		3	3
				12	= 9 + 3	= 3	+ 9
	Strophe 13	Total, v. 27-28		20	= 13 + 7	= 11	+ 9
		Total, v. 24-28		52	= 33 + 19	= 35	+ 17
	Canticle II.2	Total, v. 23-28		46	= 29 + 17	= 29	+ 17
		Total, v. 21-28		58	= 36 + 22	= 41	+ 17
	Canto II	Total, v. 18-28		78	= 46 + 32	= 61	+ 17
		Total, v. 2-28		185/186	= 106/107 + 79	= 61+124/125	
		Total, v. 1-28		191/192	= 112/113 + 79	= 61+130/131	
		With the heading, v. 1-28		193/194	= 114/115 + 79		

* In v. 4 many scholars and most modern translations read לְמוֹתָם '...for them; sleek...', instead of MT לְמוֹתָם, 'for their death' (see BHS). The word count of the emended text is highlighted. The emendation effects the numerical structure of MT negatively in three instances: in vs. 2-5 the 26 words change to 27; in vs. 2-7 the YHWH 'èchad formula disappears, and in vs. 1-28 the 130 (5 x 26) words (Column d) change to 131. The only positive change is that the two middle words in v. 15a are now אֶסְפְּרָה כְּמוֹ, 'I will speak thus', constituting a meaningful centre on word level, which cannot be said of the middle word of MT, כְּמוֹ. Despite this, from a logotechnical point of view, the *lectio difficilior* of MT, should prevail over the emended text.

Observations

- Neither the middle word, **כְּמוֹ**, 'thus', nor the middle colon in v. 15a, appear to be meaningful. A meaningful centre may be found in terms of the 28 verselines, namely **vs. 14-15**, significantly surrounded by **26** verselines, **13** on each side (**13 + 2 + 13**):

וַיֹּאדָה נְגִנָה כָּל־הַיּוֹם וַיֹּאדָה נְגִנָה כָּל־הַיּוֹם
אִם־אָמַרְתִּי אֶסְפְּרָה כְּמוֹ הִנֵּה דוֹר בְּנֵיךָ בְּגֵדְתִי :

For all day long I suffer affliction // and every morning I am chastened.

If I had said, "I will speak **thus**" // I would have betrayed your people.

The distinct meaningful centres of Cantos I and II are also to be found on verseline level - see Observation 4 below.

- The direction of address plays a major role in the structure of the text: there are in total **130** (5 x **26**) words in 3rd person (Column d), with 61 in 2nd person (Column c). Additionally, the first **17** verselines, with their **34** (2 x **17**) cola, coinciding with the Masoretic verses 1-17, are phrased throughout in 3rd person form, creating a clear caesura between vs. 17 and 18, which defines the canto structure.

vs. 1-17	Canto I	17 verselines	34 cola	113 words
vs. 18-28	Canto II	11 verselines	23 cola	78 (3 x 26) words.

The caesura is strengthened by the fact that the 11 verselines of Canto II are made up of exactly **78** words. They are phrased for the most part (**61** words) in 2nd person form (Column c), except for the **17** 3rd person words of vs. 26 and 28a-b (Column d).

- In terms of content, the caesura marks the crucial turning point in the poem, the situation *before*, and *after* the confrontation with God:

Canto I is very aptly phrased in 3rd person in order to accentuate the great *distance* between the the speaker and the godless, on the one hand, and God on the other hand; this section contains his experiences *before* he 'went into God's sanctuary' and came near to God;

Canto II, on the other hand is for the most part phrased in 2nd person in order to illustrate the speaker's *nearness* to God (cf. v. 28!): it contains his experiences *after* meeting God in the sanctuary. Therefore, it is not surprising that this passage is made up of **78** (3 x **26**) words, of which **61** are in 2nd person and **17** in 3rd person (vs. 26 and 28a-b). Its special position is additionally emphasized by the fact that it features the *kebod* YHWH formula and the two *kabod* numbers **23** and **32** signifying the presence of God - see Observation 6 below.

- The division of the text into these two sections is corroborated by the fact that both have their own distinct meaningful centre on verseline level (as in the whole psalm).

The pivotal verseline of Canto I is v. 9 (**17** = 8 + 1 + 8):

They set their mouths against the heavens;
and their tongues strut on earth.

The pivotal verseline of Canto II is v. 23 (11 = 5 + 1 + 5):

Nevertheless I am always with you;
you hold my right hand.

The two centres aptly describe the quintessence of the situation *before* and *after* the first person speaker's confrontation with God in the sanctuary. The sharp contrast between the two situations cannot be expressed more eloquently.

Interesting to note is that the first pivotal verseline, v. 9, has **26** letters, while the second, v. 23, has **23** letters. It is hard to say whether this is merely a matter of chance. The same goes for the fact that v. 26, the first verseline of the last 3rd person passage, is made up of **34** (2 x 17) letters.

5. The divine name numbers feature in the following instances:

vs. 2-5	26 words in total
vs. 2-7	17 words after atnach
vs. 2-9	51 (3 x 17) words in total
vs. 8-12	34 (2 x 17) words in total
vs. 12-16	34 (2 x 17) words in total
vs. 13-17	34 (2 x 17) words in total
vs. 18-22	17 words before atnach
vs. 17-22	17 words after atnach
vs. 23-26	26 words in total
vs. 23-27	34 (2 x 17) words in total, with 26 in 2 nd person
vs. 23-28	17 words after atnach
vs. 26-28	17 words in 3 rd person
vs. 1-28	130 (5 x 26) words in 3 rd person.

6. In vs. 2-6 the **39** words divide neatly into **26** in vs. 2-5 and **13** in vs. 4-6, constituting the YHWH *echad* formula, **39** = **26** + **13**, which signifies the uniqueness of God YHWH. Moreover, the **58** words in vs. 18-26 divide precisely into **32** in vs. 18-22 and **26** in vs. 23-26, constituting the *kebod* YHWH formula, **58** = **32** + **26**, signifying the presence of God's glory in the sanctuary. In addition, the **58** words in vs. 18-27 addressed to God (Column c) also constitute the *kebod* YHWH formula, dividing into **32** words in vs. 18-22 and **26** in vs. 23-27. Finally, the **78** (3 x 26) words of the whole Canto II are divided by the atnach into **46** (2 x 23) words before, and **32** after atnach.

The abrupt switch from addressing God in 2nd person in vs. 18-25 to speaking *about him* in 3rd person in v. 26 may be understood as a device to focus attention on the important, concluding statement in v. 26. In v. 27, the 2nd person form is resumed, but in v. 28a-b it suddenly changes to 3rd person, and in v. 28c once again back to 2nd person. In my opinion, as in Psalms 54, 56, 59, 60 and 62, the sudden change in the direction of address at the end of the psalm indicates a coda. For the coda, see the [General Introduction](#), "The use of a coda as a device for conclusion".

7. The name יהוה occurs only in v. 28, in the phrase אֲדַבְרֵי יְהוָה, where it obviously highlights the coda, a feature Psalm 73 shares with Psalms 74 and 75 – see the final Observation in my Analyses of [Psalms 74](#) and [75](#).

The word אֱלֹהִים occurs 3 times: in the first and last verseline and in v. 26. The designation אֲדַבְרֵי features also in v. 20, while אֱל occurs in vs. 11 and 17, and עֲלִיּוֹן (with אֱל) in v. 11. This is the first of the 7 occurrences of the important keyword עֲלִיּוֹן in the 11 Asaphite psalms in Book III. For particulars, see Observation 1 in my Analysis of [Psalm 78](#).

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Dr. C.J. Labuschagne Brinkhorst 44 9751 AT Haren (Gron) The Netherlands labuschagne.cj@planet.nl	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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