

Psalm 80— 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 80

- The divine name numbers as a structuring device underscores the regular poetic framework of Psalm 80. The central core of the poem, the **52**-word lament over the vine and the vineyard (vs. 9-16) is surrounded by the **78**-word (3 x **26**) prayer for restoration, which is in two parts:

vs. 2-8 First part of the people's prayer for restoration 49

vs. 9-16 Lament over the vine and the vineyard 52

vs. 17-20 Second part of the people's prayer for restoration 29

vs. 2-20 Total: 130 = 2 x 26 + 3 x 26 = 52 + 78
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This is reminiscent of the envelope technique used in Psalms 77, 81, and 83, and significantly also in Deuteronomy 33. See below Observation 3.

- A special feature of Psalm 80, which it shares with other Asaphite Psalms, 76, 78, 81, and 82, is the use of the numerical value of a keyword to help structure the text. Here, two words serve this purpose: first, נֵיִן, 'vine' (**34**), additionally functioning as *inclusion* to demarcate the lament over the vine and the vineyard (vs. 9-16), and second, הַשִּׁבְנוּ, 'restore us' (**58**), which features also in the refrain (vs. 4a, 8a and 20a).
- In line with the compositional technique used in all Asaphite psalms analyzed so far, the meaningful centre of Psalm 80 - the 'metaphor of the vine' in vs. 9-12 - is not found on word level, but in terms of the poetic structure: the **middle canticle** (5 = 2 + 1 + 2), the **2 middle strophes** (10 = 4 + 2 + 4) and the **4 middle verselines** (20 = 8 + 4 + 8).

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

- Van der Lugt: 2-3a, 3b-4 | 5-6, 7-8 || 9-10, 11-12 | 13-14, 15-16 || 17-18, 19-20 (5 sub-sections – 3 cantos, of which the first 2 are divided into canticles), with 10 strophes, 20 verselines and 40 cola (rightly excluding v. 16b as dittography).
- Fokkelman: 2–3a, 3b–4 || 5–6, 7–8 || 9–10, 11–12, 13–14 || 15–17, 18–20 (4 stanzas with 9 strophes - taking vs. 15-17 and 18-19 as the 8th and 9th strophes – 20 verselines and 42 cola, regarding not only v. 10, but also v. 15 as a tricolon).
- Labuschagne: 2-3a, 3b-4 | 5-6, 7-8 || 9-10, 11-12 | 13-14, 15-16 || 17-18, 19-20 (as Van der Lugt, except that I find 41 cola, taking v. 10 as a tricolon).

Logotechnical analysis

- Columns **a** and **b** show the number of words before and after the atnach.
- Column **c**: the prayer for restoration; **d**: the lament over the vine and vineyard.
- The numbering of the verselines is in **brown**.

		Total	a	b	c	d
1:	Heading לְמִנְצַח אֶל־שִׁשִּׁים עֲדוּת לְאֶסֶף מְזֻמּוֹר:	6	3	3		
2a-b	רֵעָה יִשְׂרָאֵל הָאֲזִינָה נָהוּג כְּצֹאן יוֹסֵף Total, v. 2a-b	3 3 6	3 3 6		3 3 6	
2c	יָשָׁב הַכְּרוּבִים הוֹפִיעָה:	3		3	3	
3a*	לְפָנַי אֲפָרִים (וּבְגִימָן) וּמְנֹשָׁה Total, v. 2c-3a	3 6	3 = 3		3 = 6	0 + 0
	Strophe 1 Total, v. 2-3a	12	= 9	+ 3	= 9	+ 0
3b	עוֹרְרָה אֶת־גְּבוּרַתְךָ וּלְכָה לִישָׁעָתָה לָנוּ: Total, v. 3b-c	3 3 6	3 3 = 3		3 3 = 6	
	Total, v. 2-3c	18	= 12	+ 6	= 18	+ 0
4	אֱלֹהִים הַשִּׁבְנוּ וְהָאֵר פְּנִידָה וְנֹשָׁעָה: Total, v. 4	2 3 5	2 3 = 2		2 3 = 5	0 + 0 + 0
	Strophe 2 Total, v. 3b-4	11	= 5	+ 6	= 11	+ 0
	Canticle I.1 Total, v. 2-4	23	= 14	+ 9	= 23	+ 0
5	יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים צְבָאוֹת עֲד־מְתֵי עֲשָׂנָה בְּתַפְלַת עַמּוֹד: Total, v. 5	3 5 8	3 5 = 3		3 5 = 8	0 + 0 + 0
6	הָאֶכְלְתֶם לֶחֶם דְּמַעְהָ וּתְשַׁקְמוּ בְּדַמְעוֹת שְׁלִישׁ: Total, v. 6	3 3 6	3 3 = 3		3 3 = 6	0 + 0 + 0
	Strophe 3 Total, v. 5-6	14	= 6	+ 8	= 14	+ 0
	Total, v. 2-6	37	= 20	+ 17	= 37	+ 0
7	הַשִּׁימְנוּ מְדוּן לְשִׁבְנוּ וְאִיבִינוּ יְלַעְגוּ־לָמוּ: Total, v. 7	3 3 6	3 3 = 3		3 3 = 6	0 + 0 + 0
	Total, v. 3-7	34	= 17	+ 17	= 34	+ 0
8	אֱלֹהִים צְבָאוֹת הַשִּׁבְנוּ וְהָאֵר פְּנִידָה וְנֹשָׁעָה (סְלָה): LXX Total, v. 8	3 3 6	3 3 = 3		3 3 = 6	0 + 0 + 0
	Total, v. 4-8	31	= 14	+ 17	= 30	+ 0
	Strophe 4 Total, v. 7-8	12	= 6	+ 6	= 12	+ 0
	Numerical Total, v. 2-4	23	= 14	+ 9	= 23	+ 0
	Canticle I.2 Chiasmus Total, v. 5-8	26	= 12	+ 14	= 26	+ 0
	Canto I First part of prayer, v. 2-8	49	= 26	+ 23	= 49	+ 0

9	נֶפֶן מִמְצָרִים תְּסִיעֵ֥	9	3	3	3
	נֶפֶן = 34 (3 + 17 + 14)				
	Vs. 9-12, 4 middle vs.lines:		3	3	3
10	פְּנִיתַ לְפָנֶיהָ֙	10	2	2	2
	and the 9 middle cola:		2	2	2
	(41 = 16 + 4 + 1 + 4 + 16)		2	2	2
	Strophe 5 Total, v. 9-10		12 = 5 + 7 = 0 + 12		
11	כָּסּוּ הַרִים צִלְהָ֙	11	3	3	3
	The 2 middle words		3	3	3
	130 = 64 + 2 + 64			3	3
12	תְּשַׁלַּח קִצִּירָהּ עַד־גְּמָ֙	12	4	4	4
	וְאֶל־נְהַר יִזְקֹתֶיהָ:		3	3	3
	Strophe 6 Total, v. 11-12		13 = 7 + 6 = 0 + 13		
Canticle II.1	Metaphor of the vine, v. 9-12		25 = 12 + 13 = 0 + 25		
	Total, v. 5-12		51 = 24 + 27 = 26 + 25		
13	לָמָּה פָּרַצְתָּ גְדָרֶיהָ֙	13	3	3	3
	וְאֶרְוָה כָּל־עַבְרֵי דָרְךָ:		4	4	4
14*	יִכְרַסְמֶנָּה חֲזוּר מִיַּעֲרָ֙	14	3	3	3
	וְזִיו שְׂרָי יִרְעָנָה:		3	3	3
	Strophe 7 Total, v. 13-14		13 = 6 + 7 = 0 + 13		
	Total, v. 11-14		26 = 13 + 13 = 0 + 26		
15	אֱלֹהִים צָבָאוֹת שׁוֹבְכ־נָ֙	15	4	4	4
	תִּבְטַטְּ מִשָּׁמַיִם וּרְאֵהָ֙		3	3	3
	וּפְקֹד נֶפֶן זֹאת:	16	3	3	3
	נֶפֶן = 34 (3 + 17 + 14)				
16a*	וּכְנָה אֲשֶׁר־נִטְעָה יְמִינֶיהָ֙		4	4	4
	[וְעַל־בֵּן אִמְצָתָה לָּהּ:]		0	0	0
	Total, v. 16a		4 = 4 + 0 = 0 + 4		
	Strophe 8 Total, v. 15-16a		14 = 11 + 3 = 0 + 14		
	Canticle II.2 Total, v. 13-16a		27 = 17 + 10 = 0 + 27		
Canto II Lament over the vine(yard), v. 9-16a			52 = 29 + 23 = 0 + 52		
17	שָׂרְפָה בְּאֵשׁ כְּסוּחָהּ֙	17	3	3	3
	מִנְעֵרַת פְּנִיךָ יֵאבְדוּ:		3	3	3
	Total, v. 17		6 = 3 + 3 = 6 + 0		
	Total, v. 9-17		58 = 32 + 26 = 6 + 52		
18	תְּהִי־יֶדְךָ עַל־אִישׁ יְמִינֶךָ֙	18	5	5	5
	עַל־בֶּן־אָדָם אִמְצָתָה לָּהּ:		5	5	5
	Total, v. 18		10 = 5 + 5 = 10 + 0		
	Strophe 9 Total, v. 17-18		16 = 8 + 8 = 16 + 0		
	Total, v. 9-18		68 = 37 + 31 = 16 + 52		

19	וְלֹא־נִסּוּג מִמֶּדָּה [^]	19	3	3	3
	תְּחִינּוֹ וּבִשְׁמֹד נִקְרָא:		3	3	3
	Total, v. 19		6	= 3 + 3	= 6 + 0
20	יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים צְבָאוֹת הַשִּׁבְנוּ [^] = 58 הַשִּׁבְנוּ	20	4	4	4
	הָאֵר פָּנֶיךָ וְנִשְׁעָה:		3	3	4
	Total, v. 20		7	= 4 + 3	= 7 + 0
	Strophe 10 Total, v. 19-20		13	= 7 + 6	= 13 + 0
	Canto III Second part of prayer, v. 17-20		29	= 15 + 14	= 29 + 0
	Total, v. 15-20		43	= 26 + 17	= 29 + 14
	Total, v. 5-20		107	= 56 + 51	= 55 + 52
	Total, v. 2-20		130	= 70 + 60	= 78 + 52
	With the heading, v. 1-20		136	= 73 + 63	

- V. 3a: many commentators have pointed out that there might be a problem with one of the three tribes mentioned, Ephraim, Benjamin and Manasseh. In *BHS* it is noted that one Hebrew manuscript lacks the name Benjamin, while two others lack Manasseh. Since Ephraim and Manasseh is a pair, Benjamin is certainly the odd one out. Additionally, in light of the fact that in v. 2b, Joseph is mentioned explicitly as representing Northern Israel (cf. Ps. 77:16), the reference to Benjamin, positioned between Ephraim and Manasseh, is highly questionable. In my opinion, the name of Benjamin, as the most northern Judean tribe, which always lived in close association with Judah, was inserted later by a scribe who interpreted the reference to Israel in v. 2a as not exclusively referring to the Northern Kingdom. Moreover, it is very likely that the insertion was also inspired by the words of אִישׁ יְמִינֶךָ, ‘the man of your right hand’ in v. 18a. These considerations lead to my decision to exclude ‘Benjamin’ from the word count.
- V. 14a: in the Leningrad Codex the ע of מִיָּעַר is elevated. The significance of such ‘suspended letters’ – so designated by the Masoretes in the margin – is in most cases to indicate a correction of an earlier text, but here it may denote the middle letter of the Psalter. See Emanuel Tov, *Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible*, Fortress Press: Minneapolis, Van Gorcum: Assen/Maastricht, 1992, p. 57.
- V. 8b: at the end of the verse the LXX has a סְלָה, most probably in order to demarcate vs. 2-8.
- V. 16b: I exclude these four words from the word-count. Many scholars rightly regard them as a case of dittography based on v. 18b (see *BHS*). The two emendations (in v. 3a and 16b) bring the total number of words to **130** (5 x **26**). The latter number is particularly significant, because Psalm 79, a sister poem of Psalm 80, is also made up of exactly **130** words!

Observations

1. The arithmetic centre of the **130** (5 x **26**) words of the emended text of the poem is constituted by the two words וְעֵנְפֶיהָ אֲרָזִי, ‘and its branches are cedars’, in v. **11b** (130 = 64 + 2 + 64). The two words can hardly be regarded as the meaningful centre. It must lead to the conclusion that the meaningful centre is not to be found on word level, but in terms of the poetical structure, as is the case in all Asaphite psalms studied so far. See below, and also Observations 1-3 in my analysis of [Psalm 79](#).
2. In search of the meaningful centre, I found it in *vs. 9-12*, the metaphor of the vine. These four verses constitute the **middle canticle** (5 = 2 + 1 + 2), coinciding with the **2** middle strophes (10 = 4 + 2 + 4), the **4** middle verselines (20 = 8 + 4 + 8) and the **9** middle cola (41 = 16 + 9 + 16). The pivotal position of the middle canticle is buttressed by the fact that it is the only canticle with 9 cola (the others are all made up of 8 cola):

9 גִּפְן מִמִּצְרַיִם תִּסְיַע אֱ תִגְרַשׁ גּוֹיִם וְתִטְעֶהָ:
 10 פְּנִיתָ לְפָנֶיהָ וְתִשְׂרַשׁ שָׂרְשֶׁיהָ וְתִמְלֵא אֶרֶץ:
 11 כִּסּוּ הָרִים צִלָּהּ וְעֵנְפֶיהָ אֶרְוֵי-אֵל:
 12 תִּשְׁלַח קַצְיָרָה עַד-רֹם אֱ וְאֶל-נְהַר יִנְקוּתֶיהָ:

A vine from Egypt you dug out // you drove out nations and planted it.

You cleared the ground for it // so that it struck root // and filled the land.

The mountains were covered with its shade // and its branches were divine cedars.

It put out its boughs all the way to the Sea // and to the River its shoots.

There is no doubt in my mind that the text has purposefully been so arranged that the passage dealing with YHWH's transplanting of the vine from Egypt to the promised land, was positioned at the arithmetic centre on the level of sub-sections (cantos and canticles), strophes, verselines and cola. Needless to say, the 'vine-passage' is very meaningful, because it focuses on the ideal situation in the land before the catastrophe of the exile.

3. The overall framework based on Van der Lugt's rhetorical analysis: 5 sub-sections, 10 strophes, 20 verselines and 40 cola (in my view 41), is significantly underscored by the numerical structure based on the logotechnical analysis: the **52-word** (2 x 26) lament (25 + 27) is surrounded by the **78** (3 x 26) words of the prayer (49 + 29). See Psalm 77 for a strikingly similar feature, where we find **78** (3 x 26) words in the central section, surrounded by **68** (4 x 17) in the framework. Compare also the 69-word central section of [Psalm 81](#) surrounded by **51** (3 x 17) words, as well as the **51-word** (3 x 17) central canto of [Psalm 83](#)!

2-4	1 Canticle	2 strophes	4 vs.lines	8 cola	23 w.
5-8	1 Canticle	2 strophes	4 vs.lines	8 cola	26 w.
9-12	1 Canticle	2 strophes	4 vs.lines	9 cola	25 w.
13-16	1 Canticle	2 strophes	4 vs.lines	8 cola	27 w.
17-20	1 canto	2 strophes	4 vs.lines	8 cola	29 w.
2-20	5 canticles	10 strophes	20 vs.lines	41 cola	78 w. 52 w.

Finally, note that the vine and the vineyard are evidently a metaphor for Joseph, who is specifically mentioned in v. 2! The conspicuous way in which the **52-word** lament over the vine(yard) is enveloped by **78** (3 x 26) words, reminds us of the **52-word** Blessing for Joseph in Deuteronomy 33 (vs. 13-17), which is strikingly encompassed in a comparable way:

Deut. 33:1-12	146 words
Deut. 33:13-17	2+ 52 (3 x 26) words
Deut. 33:18-29	136 (8 x 17).

Since this cannot be a matter of coincidence, it strongly suggests that Psalm 80 and Deuteronomy 33 are interdependent. In my opinion, the author of Deuteronomy 33 (an Asaphite Levite?) was familiar with Psalm 80, and used the central positioning and the size (**52** words) of the 'Joseph passage' as a model to give structure to the Blessing of Moses with the Joseph blessing at the centre. See Observation 4 in my Analysis of [Deuteronomy 33](#).

4. Note that the **49** words of vs. 2-4 and 5-8 together form a numerical chiasmus, and that vs. 5-8 and 9-12 together have **51** (3 x 17) words.

The fact that the word גִּפְן, 'vine', is the very first word of the passage (v. 9a), and that it recurs at the end (v. 15c), shows that it functions as an *inclusion*, emphasizing the unity of the entire vine-passage vs. 9-16.

When I counted the letters in the meaningful centre, which I did intuitively, I found **26** letters in v. 9, and **102** (6 x 17) altogether in 9-12. There is every reason to believe that this is not a matter of coincidence, but consciously so designed. This has to do

with the numerical value of the crucial keyword **נֶפֶן**, 'vine', which is **34** (3 + 17 + 14), and **102** is 3 x **34**. Significantly, vs. 3-7, a substantial part of the prayer, is made up of **34** words, with **17** before, and **17** after atnach. That this is not a matter of chance either, gains in credibility in light of the fact that vs. 9-18 have **68** (2 x **34**) words. See the [General Introduction](#), "The numerical value of a keyword in the text".

5. The assumption about the numerical value of the keyword **נֶפֶן** is underscored by the conspicuous presence of another keyword, **הַשִּׁבְנוּ**, 'restore us!', which expresses the leading idea of the prayer. It features in the refrains concluding the three sections of the prayer in a striking, gradual progression: 2 words, 3 words, 4 words:

Canticle I.1,	vs. 2-4 (in v. 4a)	God, restore us!
Canticle I.2,	vs. 5-8 (in v. 8a)	God of Hosts, restore us!
Canto III,	vs. 17-20 (in v. 20a)	YHWH, God of Hosts, restore us!*

Its numerical value, **58** (5 + 21 + 10 + 2 + 14 + 6), is used - as in the case of **נֶפֶן** - to define the total number of words in part of the text, in this case, vs. 9-17. The compositional formula of this passage is highly significant: **58 = 32 + 26**, being an exact presentation of the *kebod*-YHWH formula! See the [General Introduction](#), under "Special patterns".

6. The divine name numbers feature in the following way:

vs. 2-6	17 words after atnach
vs. 3-7	34 words, with 17 before, and 17 after atnach
vs. 4-8	17 words after atnach
vs. 5-8	26 words in total
vs. 2-8	26 words before atnach
vs. 5-12	51 (3 x 17) words in total
vs. 11-14	26 words in total
vs. 9-16a	52 (2 x 26) words in total
vs.13-16a	17 words before atnach
vs. 9-17	26 words after atnach
vs. 9-18	68 (4 x 17) words in total
vs. 15-20	43 words in total, with 26 before, and 17 after atnach
vs. 5-20	51 (3 x 17) words after atnach
vs. 2-20	78 (3 x 26) words in the prayer for restoration (column c)
vs. 2-20	52 (2 x 26) words in the lament over the vine (column d)
vs. 2-20	130 (5 x 26) words in total, as in Psalm 79
vs. 1-20	136 (8 x 17) words including the heading.

7. The name **יהוה** occurs twice in the designation **יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים זְבָאוֹת** (vs. 5a and 20a). The epithet **זְבָאוֹת** features 4x (vs. 5a, 8a, 15a, and 20), in two instances in the combination **אֱלֹהִים זְבָאוֹת**. (vs. 8a and 15a). The designation **אֱלֹהִים** occurs 5 times (vs. 4a, 5a, 8a, 15a, and 20a). The word **אֵל**, occurring in v. 11b, functions as a superlative in the expression **אֲרֵי-אֵל**, 'divine cedars', i.e., 'mighty cedars'.

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* Compare the stepped tower structure (3 + 5 + 7) of the [Priestly Blessing](#). For the refrains in the Book of Psalms, see Pieter van der Lugt, *CAS*, 2006, pp. 490ff.