

# Psalm 148— Logotechnical Analysis

## Guidelines

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

## Specific features of Psalm 148

- Like Psalm 147, this psalm has a lucid, regular structure: 3 cantos with 7 strophes and 14 verselines. Its tripartite canto framework is determined by the three categories of subjects called to praise YHWH: the celestial, the terrestrial, and the human.
- A feature it shares with Psalms 145, 146, 147 and 150 is the skilful use of specific series defined by symbolic numbers: the number of fullness, **7**, and the *kabod* number **23**.
- The coda in v. 14 is about the praise in triumph of the godfearing Israelites, which clearly preludes the triumphant song of praise in Psalm 149.

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

- Van der Lugt: 1-2, 3-4, 5-6 || 7-8, 9-10, 11-12, 13-14 (2 cantos and 7 strophes, with 14 verselines and 30 cola).
- Fokkelman: similarly, except that he finds 15 verselines, taking vs. 13-14 as 3 bicola instead of 2 tricola.
- Labuschagne: 1-2, 3-4, 5-6 || 7-8, 9-10 || 11-12, 13-14 (3 cantos with 7 strophes, 14 verselines and 30 cola, taking v. 14 as a coda within Strophe 7).

## Logotechnical analysis

- Columns **a** and **b** show the number of words before and after the atnach.
- Column **c**: words calling the heavens, all kings and all peoples to praise.
- Column **d**: words calling the earth and all terrestrial powers and creatures to praise.
- The numbering of the verselines coincides with that of the Masoretic verses.

		Total	a	b	c	d
1	הַלְלוּ יְהוָה Hallelu-yah	2	= 2	+ 0	0	0
	7 imperatives	5	5		5	
	in Canto I					
	הַלְלוּהוּ בַּמְרוֹמִים:	2		2	2	
2	7 celestial subjects	3	3		3	
	1 הַלְלוּהוּ כָּל־מַלְאָכָיו					
	2 הַלְלוּהוּ כָּל־צְבָאוֹ:	3		3	3	
	Strophe 1 Total, v. 1-2	13	= 8	+ 5	= 13	+ 0
3	3 and 4 הַלְלוּהוּ שְׁמֵי וְיִרְחֵי	3	3		3	
	5 הַלְלוּהוּ כָּל־כּוֹכְבֵי אֹר:	4		4	4	
4 *	6 הַלְלוּהוּ שְׁמֵי הַשָּׁמַיִם	3	3		3	
	7 וְהַיָּמִים אֲשֶׁר מֵעַל הַשָּׁמַיִם:	4		4	4	
	Total, v. 4	7	= 3	+ 4	= 7	+ 0
	Strophe 2 Total, v. 3-4	14	= 6	+ 8	= 14	+ 0
	Total, v. 1-4	27	= 14	+ 13	= 27	+ 0
5	Jussive form!	4	4		4	
	יְהַלְלוּ אֶת־שֵׁם יְהוָה:					
	See Observation 3 below	4		4	4	
	כִּי הוּא צְנִיחַ וְנִבְרָאוּ:					
6	Compare v. 13a	3	3		3	
	וַיַּעֲמִידֵם לְעֵד לְעוֹלָם					
	חֲקִי־נִתֵּן וְלֹא יַעֲבוֹר:	4		4	4	
	Total, v. 6	7	= 3	+ 4	= 7	+ 0
	Strophe 3 Total, v. 5-6	15	= 7	+ 8	= 15	+ 0
	Canto I Total, v. 1-6	42	= 21	+ 21	= 42	+ 0

7	1 imperative	הָלְלוּ אֶת־יְהוָה מִן־הָאָרֶץ <sup>^</sup>	5	5	5
	in Canto II	: תַּנְיִינִים וְכָל־תְּהוֹמוֹת:	3	3	3
	<b>7</b> terrestrial powers/forces	Total, v. 7	8	= 5 + 3	= 0 + 8
8		אִשׁ וּבָרָה שְׁלֹג וְקִיטוֹר <sup>^</sup>	4	4	4
		: רוּחַ סַעֲרָה עֹשֶׂה דְבָרוֹ:	4	4	4
		Total, v. 8	8	= 4 + 4	= 0 + 8
	Strophe 4	Total, v. 7-8	16	= 9 + 7	= 0 + 16
9		הַהָרִים וְכָל־נִבְעוֹת <sup>^</sup>	3	3	3
	<b>8</b> terrestrial subjects	: עֵץ פָּרִי וְכָל־אֲרָזִים:	4	4	4
		Total, v. 9	7	= 3 + 4	= 0 + 7
	Vs. 7-9, logotechnical centre:	Total, v. 7-9	<b>23</b>	= 12 + 11	= 0 + 23
10	107 = 42 + <b>23</b> + 42	תַּחֲתֵיהָ וְכָל־בְּהֵמָה <sup>^</sup>	3	3	3
		: רִמְשׁ וְצַפּוֹר כְּנָף:	3	3	3
		Total, v. 10	6	= 3 + 3	= 0 + 6
	Strophe 5	Total, v. 9-10	13	= 6 + 7	= 0 + 13
	<b>Canto II</b>	<b>Total, v. 7-10</b>	<b>29</b>	= 15 + 14	= 0 + 29
11		מַלְכֵי־אֲרֶץ וְכָל־לְאֻמִּים <sup>^</sup>	4	4	4
	<b>8</b> human subjects	: שָׂרִים וְכָל־שֹׁפְטֵי אֲרֶץ:	4	4	4
	Altogether <b>23</b> terrestrial subjects	Total, v. 11	8	= 4 + 4	= 8 + 0
		Total, v. 5-11	<b>52</b>	= 26 + 26	= 23 + 29
12		בַּחֲוָרִים וְגַם־בְּתוֹלוֹת <sup>^</sup>	3	3	3
		: וְקִנְיִם עִם־נְעָרִים:	3	3	3
		Total, v. 12	6	= 3 + 3	= 6 + 0
	Strophe 6	Total, v. 11-12	14	= 7 + 7	= 14 + 0
	Numerical	Total, v. 1-6	<b>42</b>	= 21 + 21	= 42 + 0
	Chiasmus	Total, v. 7-12	<b>43</b>	= 22 + 21	= 14 + 29
		Total, v. 1-12	<b>85</b>	= 43 + 42	= 56 + 29
13	Compare v. 5a	יְהַלְלוּ אֶת־שֵׁם יְהוָה	4	4	4
		כִּי־נִשְׁנֵב שְׁמוֹ לְבָדוּי <sup>^</sup>	4	4	4
		: הוֹדוּ עַל־אֲרֶץ וְשָׁמַיִם:	4	4	4
		Total, v. 13	12	= 8 + 4	= 12 + 0
		Total, v. 11-13	<b>26</b>	= 15 + 11	= 26 + 0
		Total, v. 1-13	97	= 51 + 46	= 68 + 29
14	<b>Coda</b>	וַיָּרֶם קָרְן לְעַמּוֹ	3	3	3
		תְּהַלֵּה לְכָל־חֲסִידָיו	3	3	3
		: לְבָנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל עִם־קָרְבוֹ תְהַלְלוּ־יָת:	4	4	4
		Total, v. 14	10	= 10 + 0	= 10 + 0
	Strophe 7	Total, v. 13-14	22	= 18 + 4	= 22 + 0
	<b>Canto III</b>	<b>Total, v. 11-14</b>	<b>36</b>	= 25 + 11	= 36 + 0
		Total, v. 10-14	<b>42</b>	= 28 + 14	= 36 + 6
		Total, v. 7-14	65	= 40 + 25	= 36 + 29
		Total, v. 1-14	107	= 61 + 46	= 78 + 29
	With the two <i>hallelu-yahs</i> , v. 1-14		111	= 65 + 46	

\* In v. 4b, some commentators, e.g. Kraus and Fokkelman, delete אֲשֶׁר as 'superfluous', but this would play havoc with the meticulously designed numerical structure of the text.

## Observations

1. In terms of the 107 words of the psalm, the logotechnical centre is vs. 7-9 (42 + 23 + 42), which is meaningful in itself, but there is a better candidate. Given the strong tripartite canto framework, which is fundamentally determined by the three categories of subjects urged to praise YHWH, the middle canto, vs. 7-10, may be considered the intentionally designed meaningful centre. It concerns the entire section in which the earth and all terrestrial forces and creatures are summoned to praise:

Canto I (vs. 1-6)	the celestial subjects	42 words
Canto II (vs. 7-10)	the terrestrial forces and creatures	29 words
Canto III (vs. 11-14)	the human subjects	36 words.

Logotechnically, this larger middle passage is off-centre, but it is significantly surrounded by **78** (3 x 26) words. Compare the **26**-word off-centre meaningful core of [Psalm 146](#).

הַלְלוּ אֶת־יְהוָה מִן־הָאָרֶץ <sup>7</sup> ^ תְּנִינִים וְכָל־תְּהוֹמוֹת:

אֵשׁ וּבָרָד שֶׁלֵּג וְקִיטּוֹר <sup>8</sup> ^ רוּחַ סַעֲרָה עֹשֶׂה דְבָרוֹ:

הַהָרִים וְכָל־גִּבְעוֹת <sup>9</sup> ^ עֵץ פְּרִי וְכָל־אֲרָזִים:

הַחַיָּה וְכָל־בְּהֵמָה <sup>10</sup> ^ רֶמֶשׂ וְצִפּוֹר כָּנָף:

Praise YHWH from the earth // you sea monsters and all you ocean depths

Fire and hail, snow and ice // gales of wind obeying his word

You mountains and all you hills // you fruit trees and all you cedars

You wild beasts and all you cattle // you creeping creatures and winged birds.

Whether it is a matter of coincidence or not, it is interesting to note that the logotechnical centre (vs. 7-9) is made up of **85** (5 x 17) letters, while the meaningful core (vs. 7-10) has **107** letters, equivalent to the total number of words in the psalm!

2. It is difficult to tell whether the **29** words of the meaningful centre are consciously designed. However, this may be so, since **29** represents the numerical value of the word וְכָל, 'and all' (6 + 11 + 12 = 29), which occurs 6 times (vs. 7b, 9a, 9b, 10a, 11a and 11b).

The **23** words of the logotechnical centre may indeed be deliberately designed, being the *kabod* number signifying YHWH's presence and that of his glorious name. Moreover, the *kabod* number reverberates throughout the text and recurs particularly in the total number of **23** terrestrial forces, creatures and humans called to praise YHWH's name. Incidentally, **23** also represents the numerical value of כָּל, 'all' (11 + 12 = 23) occurring in vs. 2a, 2b and 3b. In this respect, it symbolically reinforces the idea of totality and fullness expressed by the number of fullness, **7**, which plays a crucial role in the text.

3. The psalm is made up of **7** strophes and **14** (2 x 7) verselines; moreover, Canto I has **42** (6 x 7) words, with **21** (3 x 7) before and **21** (3 x 7) after atnach; vs. 10-14 have likewise **42** words, with **28** (4 x 7) before and **14** (2 x 7) after atnach.

In addition, in Canto I, there are **7** successive occurrences of the *imperative* הַלְלוּ, 'praise' (numbered in the chart). To achieve this, the poet used the *jussive* for the final call to the heavenly subjects (v. 5a), **יְהַלְלוּ אֶת־שֵׁם יְהוָה**, 'let them praise the name of YHWH'. This injunction recurs in Canto III, in v. 13a, in connection with the human subjects. Note also that the poet employs *imperatives* in vs. 1a and 7a, at the beginning of Canto I and Canto II, to summon the celestial subjects and the terrestrial forces and creatures to praise, while he employs the *jussive* (v. 13a) for the call to human beings.

Unlike the terrestrial subjects, which are *collectively* summoned, the celestial subjects are *individually* called to praise. There are altogether **7** celestial subjects in Canto I:

1. all YHWH's angels
2. all YHWH's hosts
3. the sun
4. the moon
5. all you shining stars
6. you highest heavens
7. and you waters above the heavens.

It is not surprising to find that the poet mentions exactly **7** terrestrial powers/forces:

1. you sea monsters
2. and all you ocean depths
3. you fire
4. you hail
5. you snow
6. you ice
7. you gales of wind.

For similar series of **7** in Book V, see Psalms [105](#), [145](#), [146](#), [147](#) and [150](#), and for more examples, consult the [General Introduction](#), "Special patterns", "The menorah pattern".

4. Remarkably, when it comes to the subjects that stand, grow or live on the earth, mountains, hills, trees, beasts and humans, we find two series of **8**. This may be explained as the use of the number **8** expressing the idea of *extra* fullness (**7** + 1), but an alternative explanation is that the poet wanted to achieve altogether **23** terrestrial subjects (**7** + **8** + **8** = **23**). This is supported by the profuse use of this *kabod* number elsewhere in the text.

- |                           |                                    |
|---------------------------|------------------------------------|
| 1. you mountains          | 1. the kings of the earth          |
| 2. and all you hills      | 2. and all the peoples             |
| 3. you fruit trees        | 3. the princes                     |
| 4. and all you cedars     | 4. and all the rulers of the earth |
| 5. you beasts             | 5. the young men                   |
| 6. and all you cattle     | 6. and also the maidens            |
| 7. you creeping creatures | 7. the old men                     |
| 8. and you winged birds   | 8. together with the children.     |

5. The unity of the entire text is reinforced by the near perfect numerical chiasmus tying together vs. 1-6 and vs. 7-12:

vs. 1-6	Strophes 1-3	$42 = 21a + 21b$
vs. 7-12	Strophes 4-6	$43 = 22a + 21b$
vs. 1-12	Strophes 1-6	$85 = 43a + 42b$ .

This may suggest that there is a caesura between vs. 12||13, but separating v. 13 from vs. 11-12 is out of the question on grounds of form (**26** words) and content – v. 13 contains the call on the afore mentioned human subjects and its motivation. A strong caesura is to be found between vs. 13||14 in terms of content. The entire psalm is written from a universal perspective, but in v. 14 the focus is specifically on Israel as YHWH's special people. This means that, thematically, v. 14 stands out *within* the concluding strophe and functions as a coda. See the [General Introduction](#), "The use of a coda as a device for conclusion".

Given its particularistic perspective, focusing specifically on the people of Israel, the coda clearly preludes [Psalm 149](#), which is a song of praise to YHWH and of vengeance on the foreign nations. Note the reverberation of the keyword **הַסִּידָיוּ**, 'his devoted', of v. 14b in **הַסִּידָיוּ**, 'the devoted', in Psalm 149:1b and 5a.

6. The divine name numbers and the *kabod* number **23** feature in the following fashion:
- vs. 6-8           **23** words in total
  - vs. 7-9           **23** words in total in the logotechnical centre
  - vs. 5-11          **52** words with **26** before and **26** after atnach
  - vs. 1-12          **85** (5 x **17**) words in total
  - vs. 11-13         **26** words with **15** before and **11** after atnach
  - vs. 1-13          **51** (3 x **17**) words before and **46** (2 x **23**) after atnach
  - vs. 1-13          **68** (4 x **17**) words calling on the heavens and on humans (Column c)
  - vs. 1-14          **46** (2 x **23**) words after atnach
  - vs. 1-14          **78** (3 x **26**) words altogether in Column c.
7. The name יהוה appears 4 times (vs. 1a, 5a, 7a, 13a). The form יהִי occurs 2x (one in each of the *hallelu-yahs*).

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