

Psalm 76—Logotechnical Prosodic Analysis

Translation, Analysis, and Textual Notes

Title: Song of Zion: Praise in Time of Victory

Psalm 76:1–13

A. Section One (76:1–3)

[3.7]

76:1	To the maestro with stringed instruments //	10 1	2 2 0
	Mizmor / belonging to Asaph—a Song //	<u>10 2</u>	3 0 3
76:2	Renown in Judah is God //	15 1	3 3 0
	in Israel / great is his name //	<u>13 2</u>	3 0 3
76:3	And it came to be in Salem / ^a his tent //	12 2	3 3 0
	and his dwelling place / ^b is in Zion //	<u>14 2</u>	2 0 2
76:1–3			16 8 8

B. Section Two (76:4–6a)

[4.4]

76:4	There / ^a he broke the fiery shafts of the bow //	11 1	4 4 0
	shield and sword / and (weapons) of war—Selah //	<u>17 2</u>	4 0 4
76:3–4			13 7 6
76:5	(You are) magnificent /	<u>4 1</u>	2 2 0
76:1–5a			26 14 12
	You are more majestic / than the eternal hills //	<u>14 2</u>	3 3 0
76:1–5			29 17 12
76:6	The stouthearted / were impotent /	<u>13 2</u>	3 3 0
76:1–6a			32 20 12

C. Section Three: Middle (76:6b–8)

[5.5]

	They went to sleep //	9 1	2 2 0
	and they did not find / any of his warriors (use of) their hands //	<u>18 2</u>	6 0 6
76:3–6			29 17 12
76:1–6			40 22 18
76:7	At your rebuke / ^a O God of Jacob //	<u>16 2</u>	3 3 0
76:4–7a			27 17 10
76:3–7a			32 20 12
76:2–7a			38 23 15
76:1–7a			43 25 18
	They were cast into a deep sleep / both rider and horse //	<u>10 2</u>	3 0 3
76:6–7			17 8 9

76:4-7	30	17	13
76:2-7	41	23	18
76:1-7	46	25	21

76:8 As for you \^a **awesome** you are /

	<u>10</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>0</u>
76:6b-8a	17	8	9		
76:3-8a	38	23	15		
76:2-8a	44	26	18		
76:1-8a	49	28	21		

Who is able to stand before you /

	<u>14</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>0</u>
76:6-8b	23	14	9		
76:4-8b	36	23	13		
76:3-8b	41	26	15		
76:1-8b	52	31	21		

When your wrath explodes //

	<u>7</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>0</u>
76:3-8	43	28	15		
76:2-8	49	31	18		

D. Section Four (76:9-10)

[4.4]

76:9 From the heavens / you declare the verdict //
the earth / terrified is stunned //

	10	2	3	3	0
	<u>14</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>3</u>
76:1-9	55	34	21		

76:10 When God rises /^a in judgment //
to deliver / all the oppressed of the world—Selah //

	12	2	3	3	0
	<u>14</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>5</u>
76:6-10	39	17	22		
76:4-10	52	30	19		
76:3-10	57	34	23		
76:2-10	63	37	26		
76:1-10	68	39	29		

E. Section Five (76:11-13)

[7.3]

76:11 For the wrath of humans \^a will praise you //
(with) a remnant \^b of wrath you will gird yourself //

	12	1	4	4	0
	<u>12</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>3</u>
76:6b-11	43	23	20		
76:6-11	46	26	20		
76:5-11	51	31	20		
76:3-11	64	38	26		
76:1-11	75	43	32		

76:12	Make your vows and fulfill them / to YHWH your God //	19	2	4	4	0
	all those who surround him //	6	1	2	2	0
	bring you gifts / to the awesome one //	<u>12</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>3</u>
	76:7–12			44	27	17
	76:6–12			55	32	23
	76:4–12			68	41	27
	76:2–12			79	47	32
	76:1–12			84	49	35
76:13	He abases ^a the pride of princes //	11	1	3	3	0
	he terrifies / the kings of the earth //	<u>11</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>3</u>
	76:9–13			36	19	17
	76:7–13			50	30	20
	76:6b–13			58	32	26
	76:3–13			79	47	32
	76:1–13			90	52	38

Scansion in Accentual Stress Units: (3.7).(4.4).~~(5.5)~~.(4.4).(7.3)
 $(10 + 8) + 10 + (8 + 10) = 18 + 10 + 18 = 46$ {46 = 23 x 2}
or: **28 // 28** {28 = triangular 7}

Concentric Compositional Formula: 90 = 45 + 0 + 45 [word-count—with heading]

Notes:

- 76:3^a Reading the sequence of two successive occurrences of *munah* immediately before ^a*atnāh* in BHS as disjunctive.
- 76:3^b Reading the anomalous occurrence of two accents (*tarhā* and *munah*) on the same word in BHS as disjunctive.
- 76:4^a Reading the *dehî* in BHS as conjunctive.
- 76:7^a Reading the *dehî* in BHS as conjunctive.
- 76:8^a Reading *məhuppāk ləḡarmēh* in BHS as conjunctive.
- 76:10^a Reading *ga'ya* (= *meteg*) on the word *bəqûm* (“when he rises”) without *maqqeph* in the Ben Naphtali tradition as disjunctive. BHS represents the Ben Asher tradition, which connects the first two words in v 10 with *maqqeph*.
- 76:11^a Reading the sequence of two successive occurrences of *munah* preceded by *ga'ya* (= *meteg*) in BHS as disjunctive.
- 76:11^b Reading the sequence of *tarhā* followed by *munah* in BHS as disjunctive.
- 76:13^a Reading the *dehî* in BHS as conjunctive.

Summary of the Logotechnical Prosodic Analysis

1. In terms of balance in mora-count, Psalm 76 has five sections: 76:1–3, 4–6a, 6b–8, 9–10 and 11–13.

A	76:1	balanced dyad:	(10 + 10)	=	10 + 10	morae
	76:2–3	2 balanced dyads:	(15 + 13) + (12 + 14)	=	28 + 26	morae
B	76:4–6a	2 balanced dyad + pivot:	(11 + 17) + 4 + (14 + 13)	=	28 + 4 + 27	morae
X	76:6b–8	triad & 2 balanced dyads:	(9+18+16) + ((10+10)+[14+7])	=	43 + 41	morae
B	76:9–10	2 balanced dyads:	(10 + 14) + (12 + 14)	=	24 + 26	morae
A	76:11	balanced dyad:	(12 + 12)	=	12 + 12	morae
	76:12	balanced dyad:	(19 + [6+12])	=	19 + 18	morae
	76:13	balanced dyad:	(11 + 12)	=	11 + 12	morae

2. The first section (76:1–3) is in two parts: 76:1 and 2–3.

- 76:1–3 no use of the primary sacred numbers (17, 23, 26 and 32).

3. The second section (76:4–6) is a single part arranged in four subdivisions on the basis of word-count: 76:4, 5a, 5b and 6.

- 76:3–4 **13** words
- 76:1–5a **26** words
- 76:1–5 **17** words before *atnach*
- 76:1–6a **32** words

4. The third section (76:6b–8), the structural center of Psalm 76, is a single part arranged in six subdivisions on the basis of word-count: 76:6b, 7a, 7b, 8a, 8b and 8c.

- 76:3–6 **17** words before *atnach*
- 76:1–6 **40** [= **17+23**] words
- 76:3–7a **32** [= **2x2x2x2x2**] words
- 76:2–7a **23** words before *atnach*
- 76:1–7a **43** words [**43 = 17 + 26**]
- 76:6–7 **17** words
- 76:4–7 **17** words before *atnach*
- 76:2–7 **23** words after *atnach*
- 76:1–7 **46** (= **23 x 2**) words
- 76:6b–8a **17** words
- 76:3–8a **23** words before *atnach*
- 76:2–8a **26** words before *atnach*
- 76:1–8a **49** (= **17+32 = 23+26**) words
- 76:6–8b **23** words
- 76:4–8b **23** words before *atnach*
- 76:3–8b **26** words before *atnach*
- 76:1–8b **52** (= **26 x 2**) words
- 76:3–8 **43** words [**43 = 17 + 26**]

- 76:2–8 **49** (= **17+32** = **23+26**) words
5. The fourth section (76:9–10) is a single part arranged in two subdivisions on the basis of word-count: 76:9 and 10.
 - 76:2–9 **34** (= **17** x 2) words
 - 76:6–10 **17** words before *atnach*
 - 76:4–10 **52** (= **26** x 2) words
 - 76:3–10 **34** (= 17x2) words before and **23** words after *atnach*
 - 76:2–10 **26** words after *atnach*
 - 76:2–9 **68** (= **17** x 4) words
 6. The fifth section (76:11–13) has three parts: 76:11, 12 and 13.
 - 76:6b–11 **43** words and **23** words before *atnach*
 - 76:6–11 **46** (= **23** x 2) words and **26** words before *atnach*
 - 76:5–11 **51** (= **17** x 3) words
 - 76:3–11 **64** (= 2x2x2x2x2x2) words and **26** words after *atnach*
 - 76:1–11 **43** [= **17+26**] words before and **32** (= 2x2x2x2x2) words after *atnach*
 - 76:7–12 **17** words after *atnach*
 - 76:6–12 **55** = **32** + **23** [compositional formula]
 - 76:4–12 **68** (= **17** x 4) words
 - 76:2–12 **32** (= 2x2x2x2x2) words after *atnach*
 - 76:1–12 **49** [= **17+32** = **23+26**] words before *atnach*
 - 76:9–13 **17** words after *atnach*
 - 76:7–13 50 = 30 + 20 [compositional formula]
 - 76:6b–13 **58** = **32** + **26** [compositional formula]
 - 76:3–13 **32** (= 2x2x2x2x2) words after *atnach*
 - 76:1–13 **52** (= **26** x 2) words before *atnach*

Observations

1. Labuschagne argues his case for a 3-word **meaningful center** (vs. 8a) אַתָּה נֹרָא אַתָּה “You, **awesome** You!” He notes that the pivotal word “awesome” has 41 words on either side (if one omits the heading and the two occurrences of *Selah*, and that the word itself has the numerical value of 41 (in 22-gematria, where each of the 22 letters in the alphabet is assigned successive numbers). This would suggest that Psalm 76 had a prior history in terms of its numerical composition *before* it was “canonized” as a numerical composition within the Psalter as we now have it.
2. The opening strophe does not include the use of any of the primary sacred numbers in its numerical composition, unless a word is added to the heading. Terrien notes that LXX adds “for the Assyrians” at the end of the heading, “which may have indicated an allusion to a historical event: Sennacherib’s sudden lifting of the siege of Jerusalem (701 B.C.E.)” [p. 548]. It is more likely that this “addition” is a misreading of the Hebrew word *šîr* (“song”) for *ʿaššûr* (“Assyria”). Syriac adds “for the Ammonites,” which Terrien takes as an apparent reference to 2 Sam 12:26, “and thus relates the hymn to the wars of David.”

In favor of leaving the heading as it stands is the fact that we find the following list of the use of the primary sacred numbers throughout Psalm 76 as it stands:

76:1–5a	26	words
76:1–5	17	words before <i>atnach</i>
76:1–6a	32	words
76:1–6	40	words
76:1–7a	43	[= 17+26] words
76:1–7	46	(= 23 x 2) words
76:1–8a	49	[= 17+32 = 23+26] words
76:1–8b	52	(= 26 x 2) words
76:1–9	55	[= 23+32] words
76:1–10	68	(= 17 x 4) words
76:1–11	43	[= 17+26] words before <i>atnach</i>
76:1–12	49	[= 17+32 = 23+26] words before <i>atnach</i>
76:1–13	52	(= 26 x 2) words before <i>atnach</i>

All of the above numbers mark significant prosodic boundaries and subdivisions of units in the logotechnical prosodic analysis.

- The two uses of the word *Selah* in Psalm 76 are problematic. The logotechnical prosodic analysis suggests that the first occurrence in 76:4 may be calling attention to an unusual situation in that there is no apparent use of the primary sacred numbers at the outset of this psalm and that this verse belongs with what follows, more than with what precedes it. Moreover, the second strophe, which is introduced by this verse, appears to have an unusual boundary within verse 6 as well. The principle of enjambment appears to be operating at both boundaries of the second strophe.

The second occurrence in 76:10 does occur at a strophic boundary, as one would normally expect, which is marked by significant use of the primary sacred numbers.

- In terms of the 90 words in Psalm 76, the **arithmological center** falls between the words **ורכב וסוס** (“horsemen and charioteers”) in 76:7b, with 45 words on either side. The *Concentric Compositional Formula* is:

$$90 = 45 + 0 + 45 \quad \text{[word count—with heading]}$$

One candidate for the **meaningful center** is found by adding four words on either side of the **arithmological center**, as follows:

אלהי יעקב	O God of Jacob,
ורכב וסוס נרדם	Both rider and horse were cast into a deep sleep.
אתה נורא אתה	As for you, you are awesome.

In this instance, the *Concentric Compositional Formula* becomes:

$$90 = 41 + 8 + 41 \quad \text{[word count—with heading]}$$

$$\text{or: } 49 // 49 \quad \text{[word count with pivot in each half]}$$

$$\{49 = 17+32 = 23+26\}$$

Another candidate for the **meaningful center** is found by adding fifteen words on either side of the **arithmological center**, as follows:

אבירי לב נמו שנתם	The stouthearted went to sleep;
ולא מצאו כל אנשי חיל ידיהם	And his warriors were unable to use their hands.
מנערתך אלהי יעקב	At your rebuke, O God of Jacob,
נרדם ורכב וסוס	Both rider and horse were cast into a deep sleep.
אתה נורא אתה	As for you, you are awesome;
ומי יעמד לפניך	And who is able to stand before you,
מאז אפקך	When your wrath explodes.
משמים השמעת דין	From the heavens you declare the verdict;
ארץ יראה ושקטה	The earth terrified and it is stunned.

In this instance, the *Concentric Compositional Formula* becomes:

$$90 = 30 + 30 + 30 \quad \text{[word count—with heading]}$$

$$\text{or: } 60 // 60 \quad \text{[word count with pivot in each half]}$$

- The reference to “both the rider and the horse” in 76:7b, which occupies the structural center of Psalm 76, is reminiscent of the Song of the Sea (Exod 15:1–18; especially v 11), as Labuschagne points out (see Observation 1 in his file)—especially as used in conjunction with other terms such as “majestic” (76:5b), “awesome” (29:5, 8a). Labuschagne also calls attention to other words that connect Psalm 76 with the episode of Jacob’s encounter with God at Bethel (Gen 28:17).
- In the prosodic structure of Psalm 76 as a whole, the basic building blocks in each poetic “verseline” are the **briques** (primary syntactic accentual stress units). These sub-units are delineated by the Masoretes, who marked the boundaries with one of the following:
 - Soph Pasuq** A large colon following a word signifies the end of a verse, which does not always coincide with the end of a sentence.
 - Atnach** A small caret-like mark (like ^) beneath the consonantal text, pointing upward, is used to divide most verses. Its primary importance for our purposes concerns its use in the matter of numerical composition—i.e., the total word-count in each line is divided into the number of words before and after *atnach*.
 - Ole Weyored** A combination of two accentual signs: a caret-like mark above the consonantal text, pointing to the left, used together with the accent *merka* (an upright line beneath the consonantal text slanting to the

right). These two marks usually appear on the same word, but when that word is monosyllabic the *merka* falls on the following word. This major divider is usually considered to be a stronger disjunctive accent than *atnach*.

In the prosodic analysis presented in the translation (above), the presence of these three markers is indicated with a double slash (/). Psalm 76 has 28 **briques**, 25 of which are marked by: *soph pasuq* (13 times, at the end of each verse), *atnach* (11 times, in each verse, except verses 5 and 8), and *ole weyored* (1 time, verse 12). The remaining three **briques** are marked by *revia mugrash* (1 time, verse 2), *revia* (1 time, in verse 8), and *deḥî* (1 time, verse 6).

7. The prosodic structure of Psalm 76, in terms of these 28 **briques**, may be displayed as follows [^ represents *atnach*; : represents *soph pasuq*; † represents *ole weyored*, and ‡ represents other accents]:

I	A	¹ <i>lamnaṣēaḥ binḡîṇōṭ</i> ^	<i>mizmôr laʔāsāp šîr</i> :
		² <i>nôḏāʿ bîhûḏāḥ ʔēlôhîm</i> ^	<i>bəyîsrāʔēl</i> † <i>gāḏôl šəmô</i> :
		³ <i>wayəḥî ḥəšālēm sukkô</i> ^	<i>ûməʕônāṭô ḥəšîyôn</i> :
	B	⁴ <i>šāmmāḥ šibbar rišpē qāšet</i> ^	<i>māḡēn wəḥereḅ ûmilḥāmāḥ</i> selāḥ :
		⁵ <i>nāʔôr ʔattāḥ ʔaddîr mēnarərə ṭāreḅ</i> :	
		⁶ <i>ʔeštôlêlû ʔabbîrê lēḅ</i> †	
II	X	<i>nāmû šənāṭām</i> ^	<i>wəlōʔ māšəʔû kol ʔanšē ḥayil yəḏēhem</i> :
		⁷ <i>miggaʿārātəkā ʔēlôhê yaʿāqōḅ</i> ^	<i>nirdām</i> <i>wəreḳeḅ wāsûs</i> :
		⁸ <i>ʔattāḥ nôrāʔ ʔattāḥ</i> † <i>ûmî yaʿāmōḏ ləpānēḳā mēʔāz ʔappeḳā</i> :	
III	B	⁹ <i>miššāmayim hišmaʿtāḥ dîn</i> ^	<i>ʔereṣ yārəʔāḥ wəšāqāṭāḥ</i> :
		¹⁰ <i>bəqûm laišpāt ʔēlôhîm</i> ^	<i>ləḥôšîaʿ kol ʿanwê ʔereṣ</i> selāḥ :
	A	¹¹ <i>kî ḥāmaṭ ʔāḏām tôḏeḳā</i> ^	<i>šəʕerîṭ ḥēmōṭ taḡōr</i> :
		¹² <i>nîḏārû wəšalləmû la-yhwh ʔēlôhêḳem</i> ‡ <i>kol səḅîḅāyw</i> ^	
		<i>yôḅîlû šay lammôrāʔ</i> :	
		¹³ <i>yîḅšôr rûaḥ nəḡîḏîm</i> ^	<i>nôrāʔ ləmalḳê ʔāreṣ</i> :

8. The 28 **briques** (primary accentual stress units) are distributed within five strophes in Psalm 76 as follows: 28 = (7 + 4) + 6 + (4 + 7) = 11 + 6 + 11). The **concentric compositional formula** (on the basis of primary stress units) is **17 // 17**, with the central pivot (vv 5–6) included in each half.
9. The **arithmological center** of Psalm 76 falls between the word *wəreḳeḅ wāsûs* (“both rider and horse”) in 76:7b, with a total of 45 words on either side. Psalm 76 has 28 **briques**, 13

“verselines” (counting the heading in 1:1 as a single verseline), 5 “strophes” and 3 “cantos.” The **arithmological center** is in the middle “canto,” the middle “strophe,” the middle “verseline,” and the two middle **briques**.

10. There is divergence of opinion in regards the number of “cola” in Psalm 76:

Christensen	28	<i>briques</i> (including two in the heading)
Fokkleman	25	cola (excluding the heading)
Labuschagne	25	cola (excluding the heading)
Terrien	27	cola (excluding the heading)
van der Lugt	25	cola (excluding the heading)

11. Determining the details of the musical and literary structures of Psalm 76 as a whole calls for input on the part of others in the Psalms Group, as we consider the rhetorical features in greater depth and further information contained in the *te'amim* of this particular text.

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