

# Psalm 46—Logoprosodic Analysis

## Translation and Textual Notes

### A Mighty Fortress Is Our God

### Psalm 46:1–12

#### A. Strophe One (46:1–2)

[4.5]

46:1	For the maestro / <sup>a</sup> belonging to the sons of Korah //	12 2	3 3 0
	according to <i>Alamo</i> / <sup>b</sup> a song //	<u>8 2</u>	3 0 3
6:2	God is for us /	<u>9 1</u>	2 2 0
	(He is) a refuge / <sup>a</sup> and strength //	7 2	2 2 0
	a very present help / in times of trouble //	<u>14 2</u>	<u>4 0 4</u>
46:1–2			14 7 7

#### B. Strophe Two (46:3–5)

[7.4]

46:3	Therefore we will not fear / though the earth quakes //	17 2	6 6 0
	and the mountains slide / into the midst of the seas //	<u>15 2</u>	<u>4 0 4</u>
46:1–3			24 13 11
46:4	Though the waters thereof may roar and foam //	12 1	3 3 0
	though the mountains shake / at its swelling, <b>Selah</b> //	<u>18 2</u>	<u>4 0 4</u>
46:3–4			17 9 8
46:5	A river / its streams / <sup>a</sup> make glad the city of God //	21 2	5 5 0
	the holy place / of the dwelling of the Most High //	<u>10 2</u>	<u>3 0 3</u>
46:1–5			39 21 18

#### C. Strophe Three (46:6–8)

[6.6]

46:6	God is in the midst of her / she shall not be moved //	13 2	4 4 0
	God will help her / at break of dawn //	<u>16 2</u>	<u>4 0 4</u>
46:4–6			23 12 11
46:7	Nations roar in tumult / <span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">kingdoms totter</span> //	<u>16 2</u>	<u>4 4 0</u>
46:2–7a			45 26 19
	He utters his voice / the earth melts //	<u>15 2</u>	<u>4 0 4</u>
46:5–7			29 17 12
46:8	YHWH of Hosts / <sup>a</sup> is with us //	14 2	3 3 0
	<span style="background-color: #e0e0e0; padding: 2px;">our fortress</span> / is the God of Jacob, <b>Selah</b> //	<u>18 2</u>	<u>5 0 5</u>
46:5–8			37 20 17

D. Strophe Four (46:9–10)

[4.7]

46:9	Come, see / the works of YHWH //	14 2	4 4 0
	what desolations / he has wrought in the earth //	<u>12 2</u>	<u>4 0 4</u>
		46:6–9	<b>32 15 17</b>
46:10	He makes wars cease / to the ends / <sup>a</sup> of the earth //	<u>17 3</u>	<u>5 5 0</u>
		46:3–10a	<b>62 34 28</b>
	The bow he breaks / and he shatters the spear //	13 2	4 4 0
	chariots / he burns in the fire //	<u>12 2</u>	<u>3 0 3</u>
		46:5–10	<b>52 29 23</b>

E. Strophe Five (46:11–12)

[5.4]

46:11	Be still and know / that I / <sup>a</sup> am God //	21 3	5 5 0
	I will be exalted among the nations /	<u>9 1</u>	<u>2 0 2</u>
		46:6–11a	<b>51 29 22</b>
	I will be exalted in the earth //	<u>9 1</u>	<u>2 0 2</u>
		46:1–11	<b>92 50 42</b>
46:12	YHWH of hosts / <sup>a</sup> is with us //	14 2	3 3 0
	our fortress / is the God of Jacob, <b>Selah</b> //	<u>18 2</u>	<u>5 0 5</u>
		46:11–12	<b>17 8 9</b>
		46:1–12	<b>100 53 47</b>

Scansion in Accentual Stress Units: (4.5).(7.4).(6.6).(4.7).(5.4)  
 (9 + 11) + 12 + (11 + 9) = 20 + 12 + 20 = **52**  
 or: **32 // 32**

Concentric Compositional Formula: 100 = 50 + 0 + 50 [word count—with heading]

Notes:

- 46:1<sup>a</sup> Reading a disjunctive here; Letteris has *ga'ya* (= *meṭeg*) followed immediately by *merka*, and *raphe* as well—all on the same word.
- 46:1<sup>b</sup> Reading *mērekā* preceded by *ga'ya* (= *meṭeg*) in BHS as disjunctive.
- 46:2<sup>a</sup> Reading *munaḥ* preceded by *ga'ya* (= *meṭeg*) in Ginsburg and Letteris as disjunctive. BHS omits *ga'ya* (= *meṭeg*).
- 46:5<sup>a</sup> Reading *deḥi* in Ginsburg and Letteris as conjunctive; BHS has *revia*.
- 46:8<sup>a</sup> Reading the sequence of two consecutive occurrences of *munaḥ* in BHS as disjunctive.
- 46:10<sup>a</sup> Reading *galgal* following *šinnor* in BHS as disjunctive.
- 46:11<sup>a</sup> Reading *munaḥ* preceded by *ga'ya* (= *meṭeg*) in Ginsburg and Letteris as disjunctive. BHS omits *ga'ya* (= *meṭeg*).
- 46:12<sup>a</sup> Reading the sequence of two consecutive occurrences of *munaḥ* in BHS as disjunctive.

## Summary of the Logoprosodic Analysis

1. Psalm 46:1–8 is in five strophes: 46:1–2, 3–5, 6–8, 9–10, and 11–12:

A	46:1–2	2 balanced dyads + pivot:	$(12 + 8) + 9 + (7 + 14)$	=	$20 + 9 + 21$	morae
B	46:3–5	3 balanced dyads:	$(17 + 15) + (12 + 18) + (21 + 10)$	=	$32 + 30 + 31$	morae
X	46:6–8	2 balanced triads:	$(13 + 16 + 16) + (15 + 14 + 18)$	=	$45 + 47$	morae
B	46:9–10	2 balanced dyads + pivot:	$(14 + 12) + 17 + (13 + 12)$	=	$26 + 17 + 25$	morae
A	46:11–12	2 balanced dyads + pivot:	$(21 + 9) + 9 + (14 + 18)$	=	$30 + 9 + 32$	morae

2. The first strophe (46:1–2) is a single part.

- There is no use of the four primary compositional numbers in this strophe.

3. The second strophe (46:3–5) is a single part arranged in three subdivisions on the basis of word-count: 46:3, 4, 5

- 46:1–3            **13** words before *atnach*
- 46:3–4           **17** words
- 46:1–5           **39** (= 13 x 3)

4. The third strophe (46:6–8), which functions as a pivot within the psalm as a whole, is a single part arranged in four subdivisions on the basis of word-count: 46:6, 7a, 7b and 8.

- 46:4–6            **23** words
- 46:5–7           **17** words before *atnach*
- 46:2–7           **26** words before *atnach* and **23** words after *atnach*
- 46:1–7           **26** words after *atnach*
- 46:5–8a          **32** words
- 46:2–8a          **52** (= **26** x 2) words and **23** words **26** words after *atnach*
- 46:1–8a          **58** = **32** + **26** [compositional formula]
- 46:5–8           **17** words after *atnach*
- 46:1–8           **32** words before *atnach*

5. The fourth strophe (46:9–10) is a single part arranged in three subdivisions on the basis of word-count: 46:9, 10a and 10bc.

- 46:6–9            **32** words and **17** words after *atnach*
- 46:2–9           **65** (= **13** x 5) words and **32** words after *atnach*
- 46:9–10          **13** words before *atnach*

6. The fifth strophe (46:11–12) is a single part arranged in three subdivisions on the basis of word-count: 46:11ab, 11c and 12

- 46:11–12        **17** words
- 46:6–12        **32** words before *atnach*

## Observations

1. In terms of the 100 words in Psalm 46 (including the heading of six words in 46:1 and three instances of *Selah* in 46:4, 7 and 12), the **arithmological center** falls between the two words **מַטּוֹ מִמְּלָכוֹת** (“kingdoms totter”) in 46:7a which constitute a **meaningful center**. When these words are read as part of each half of Psalm 46, the *Concentric Compositional Formula* becomes:

$$100 = 49 + 2 + 49 \quad [\text{word count—with heading in 46:1}]$$

$$\text{or: } 51 // 51 \quad [\text{word count—with “pivot” included in each half}]$$

Craigie notes that, “The central section of this portion of the psalm is to be found in the reference to ‘nations’ and ‘kingdoms’ in v 7. It is these human powers which now threaten their chaotic might, but they “slip” (v 7: **מוֹט**) like the mountains before them, while the city of God does ‘not slip’ (v 6)” [*Psalms 1–50*. Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 19 (1983), p. 345].

The **meaningful center** may be expanded by including five words on either side of the **arithmological center**, as follows:

לפנות בקר	At break of dawn,
<b>מַטּוֹ מִמְּלָכוֹת</b> הָמוּ גוֹיִם	The nations roared, the kingdoms tottered;
נתן בקולו תמוג רץ	He gave his voice, the earth melts.

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

$$100 = 45 + 10 + 45 \quad [\text{word count—with heading in 46:1 included}]$$

$$\text{or: } 55 // 55 \quad [\text{word count—with “pivot” included in each half}]$$

$$\{55 = 23 + 32\}$$

The 6-word heading is carefully contrived in relation to the end of Psalm 46 so as to provide a series of perfectly balanced units on the basis of word-count, which frame the central core.

2. Summary of the concentric compositional formulae (including 6-word heading):

100 = 50 + 0 + 50	or: 50 // 50	word-count
100 = 49 + 2 + 49	or: <b>51 // 51</b>	{51 = 17 x 3}
100 = 45 + 10 + 45	or: <b>55 // 55</b>	
100 = 29 + 42 + 29	or: 71 // 71	{vv. 1–4b    10–12}
100 = 24 + <b>52</b> + 24	or: 76 // 76	{vv. 1–3    10b–12}
100 = 20 + 60 + 20	or: <b>80 // 80</b>	{vv. 1–3a    10c–12}
100 = 14 + 72 + 14	or: <b>86 // 86</b>	{86 = 43 x 2}
<b>52</b> = 20 + 12 + 20	or: <b>32 // 32</b>	syntactic accentual-stress units
{52 = 26 x 2}		
28 = 11 + 6 + 11	or: <b>17 // 17</b>	<b>briques</b> (primary accentual-stress units)

3. In the prosodic structure of Psalm 46 as a whole, the basic building blocks (**briques**) in each poetic **verset** are the **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 with the translation (above), the presence of these three primary disjunctive markers is indicated with a double slash (/). Psalm 46 has 28 **briques** (primary accentual-stress units), 25 of which are marked by *soph pasuq* (12 times, at the end of each verse), *atnach* (12 times, in each verse), and *ole weyored* (1 time, in verse 10). The boundaries of the three remaining **briques** are marked by *revia mugrash* (1 time, in verse 11), and *dehi* (2 times, in verses 2 and 10)

4. The prosodic structure of Psalm 46, in terms of its **briques** (primary syntactic accentual-stress units), may be displayed as follows: ^ represents *atnach*; : represents *soph pasuq*; † represents *ole weyored*; and † represents all other accent markers.

I A <sup>1</sup> *lamnaṣṣēah liḇnē qōrah* ^ *‘al ‘ālāmōt šīr* :  
<sup>2</sup> *‘ēlōhīm lānū* † *maḥṣeh wā‘ōz* ^ *‘ezrah ḥṣārōt nimṣā’ mə’ōd* :

B <sup>3</sup> *‘al kēn lō’ nīrā’ bəhāmīr ‘āreṣ* ^ *ūḥmōt hārīm bələḇ yammīm* :  
<sup>4</sup> *yehēmū yehmərū mēmāyw* ^ *yir‘āšū hārīm bəga’āwātō selāh* :  
<sup>5</sup> *nāhār pələgāyw yəśamməḥū ‘īr ‘ēlōhīm* ^ *qəḏōš miškənē ‘elyōn* :

II	X	<sup>6</sup> <i>‘ēlōhīm bəqirbāh bal timmōt</i> ^	<i>ya‘zərehā ‘ēlōhīm liḇnōt bōqer</i> :
		<sup>7</sup> <i>hāmū gōyīm māṭū mamlākōt</i> ^	<i>nātan bəqôlô tamūg ‘āreṣ</i> :
		<sup>8</sup> <i>yhwḥ ṣəḇā’ōt ‘immānū</i> ^	<i>mišgāḇ lānū ‘ēlōhē ya‘āqōḇ selāh</i> :

III B <sup>9</sup> *ləḵū ḥāzū mip‘ālōt yhwḥ* ^ *‘āšer sām šammōt bā’āreṣ* :  
<sup>10</sup> *mašbīt milḥāmōt ‘ad qəṣeh hā’āreṣ* † *qəšet yəšabbēr* †  
*wəqiṣṣēs ḥānīt* ^ *‘āgālōt yisrōp bā’ēs* :

A <sup>11</sup> harpû ûḏəʿû kî ʿānōkî ʿēlōhîm ^      ʿārûm baggôyîm †      ʿārûm bāʿāreṣ :  
<sup>12</sup> yhw̄h šōt ʿimmānû ^      mišgāb lānû ʿēlōhé yaʿāqōb selāh :

5. The **arithmological center** of Psalm 46 falls between the words *mātû mamlākôt* (“the kingdoms totter”) in 46:7a, with a total of 50 words on either side. Psalm 46 has 52 syntactic accentual-stress units, 28 **briques** (primary accentual stress units), 13 versets, 5 strophes and 3 cantos. The **arithmological center** is in the middle canto, the middle strophe, the middle verset, the middle two **briques** (primary syntactic accentual stress units), and the middle two syntactic accentual-stress units. There are 375 morae in Psalm 46—with 184 morae before the **arithmological center** in 46:8a and 191 morae after it.

According to the analysis presented here, the 28 **briques** are distributed within 5 strophes in Psalm 46 as follows:  $28 = (5 + 6) + 6 + (6 + 5) = 11 + 6 + 11$ ; or **17 // 17** with the central pivot included in each half.

6. Samuel Terrien finds 2 strophes in Psalm 46 (vv. 2–8 and 8–12) with a “single core verse” that belongs to both of them (*The Psalms: Strophic Structure and Theological Commentary* [Eerdmans, 2003], pp. 369–71.) The analysis presented here, which is based on balance in mora-count and the concentric pattern in the distribution of syntactic accentual stress units, indicates that there are 5 strophes (arranged in three cantos: vv. 1–5, 6–8 and 9–12).

Christensen	Terrien	Van der Lugt
I A 46:1–2	Heading 46:1	Heading 46:1
B 46:3–5	I 46:2–7	I 46:2–7
II X <span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">46:6–8</span>	Core 46:8	II 46:8–12
III B 46:9–10	II 46:9–12	
A 46:11–12		

Though Terrien correctly observes that the “core verse” (v. 8) belongs to both of his two Strophes (vv. 2–8 and 8–12), tying them together, he fails to see that verse 8 is part of a larger “pivot” (vv. 6–8) with this same function. Van der Lugt’s division of Psalm 46 into two contiguous cantos (vv. 2–7 and 8–12) is in line with that of most commentators.

The overall structure of Psalm 46, as revealed in the prosodic analysis presented here agrees with that proposed by Labuschagne, at least in principle. Labuschagne divides the psalm into two major segments, which combine the “Strophes” in our analysis as follows:

46:2–8      Strophes 1, 2 and 3  
46:9–12      Strophes 4 and 5

7. The evidence from the logoprosodic analysis is not conclusive in regards the 6-word heading as an integral part of Psalm 46 at the point of the numerical composition of this text, as shown in the following list of significant compositional numbers at the boundaries of the verses counting from the beginning:

