

Psalm 48:1–15

Translation, Logoprosodic Analysis, and Observations

Zion Hymn on the Kingship of YHWH

Ps 48:1–15

A. *Great Is YHWH and Mount Zion is the City of the Great King* (48:1–4) [5.8]

48:1	A song a psalm / ^a belonging to the sons of Korah //	<u>11 2</u>	<u>4 4 0</u>
		47:8–48:1	32 27 5
48:2	Great is YHWH and greatly to be praised // in the city of our God / is his holy mountain //	<u>17 1</u> <u>14 2</u>	<u>4 4 0</u> <u>4 0 4</u>
		47:7–48:2	46 34 12
48:3	It is beautiful in its loftiness / the joy of all the earth / Mount Zion / (is like) the heights of Zaphon // it is the city / of the Great King //	<u>14 2</u> <u>12 2</u> <u>6 2</u>	<u>5 5 0</u> <u>4 4 0</u> <u>3 0 3</u>
		48:1–3a 48:1–3	17 13 4 24 17 7
48:4	God is in its citadels / renown as a stronghold //	<u>22 2</u>	<u>4 4 0</u>
		48:2–4	24 17 7

B. *Look at the Other Kings—They See and Hurry Away Terrified* (48:5–6) [3.3]

48:5	For behold the kings / have assembled // they crossed over together //	<u>16 2</u> <u>8 1</u>	<u>4 4 0</u> <u>2 0 2</u>
		48:1–5	34 25 9
48:6	They saw / so they marveled / they were terrified (and) they hurried away //	<u>16 2</u> <u>9 1</u>	<u>4 4 0</u> <u>2 0 2</u>
		47:10–48:2=6	52 41 11

C. *They Tremble Like the East Wind that Shatters Ships of Tarshish* (48:7–8) [4.3]

48:7	Trembling / took hold of them // writhing / like that of a woman in travail //	<u>13 2</u> <u>9 2</u>	<u>3 3 0</u> <u>2 0 2</u>
		48:5–7	17 11 6
48:8	Like the east wind // that shatters / the ships of Tarshish //	<u>8 1</u> <u>12 2</u>	<u>2 2 0</u> <u>3 0 3</u>
		48:1–8	50 34 16

D. YHWH Has Established the City of Our God Forever (48:9) [3.3]

48:9	As we have heard / so have we seen /	16 2	4 4 0
	in the city of YHWH of Hosts /	<u>12 1</u>	<u>3 3 0</u>
		48:7-9b	17 12 5
	In the city of our God //	10 1	2 2 0
	God establishes it / forever, Selah //	<u>18 2</u>	<u>5 0 5</u>
		48:1-9	64 43 21

E. God's Covenant-Love Extends to the Ends of the Earth (48:10-11) [3.4]

48:10	We have reflected, O God, on your <i>hesed</i> //	13 1	3 3 0
	in the midst / of your temple //	<u>9 2</u>	<u>2 0 2</u>
		48:1-10	69 46 23
48:11	According to your name ^a O God /	<u>8 1</u>	<u>2 2 0</u>
		48:8-10	26 16 10
	So is your praise ^b to the ends of the earth //	12 1	5 5 0
	full of righteousness / is your right hand //	<u>12 2</u>	<u>3 0 3</u>
		48:1-11	79 53 26

F. Let Mount Zion Rejoice in Your Judgments (48:12) [3.3]

48:12	Let Mount Zion / rejoice /	<u>7 2</u>	<u>3 3 0</u>
		48:9-12a	32 22 10
	Let them be glad /	<u>7 1</u>	<u>1 1 0</u>
		48:9-12b	33 23 10
	The daughters of Judah //	<u>8 1</u>	<u>2 2 0</u>
		48:6-12c	51 34 17
	Because of / your judgments //	<u>9 2</u>	<u>2 0 2</u>
		48:10-12	23 16 7

G. Describe Zion for Posterity for God Is Our Guide Forever (48:13-15) [8.5]

48:13	Walk about Zion / and go around it //	16 2	3 3 0
	count / the towers thereof //	<u>10 2</u>	<u>2 0 2</u>
		48:11-13	23 16 7
48:14	Mark well ^a its fortress /	<u>12 1</u>	<u>3 3 0</u>
		48:11-14a	26 19 7
	Consider her palaces //	12 1	2 2 0
	that you may describe it / to the next generation //	<u>15 2</u>	<u>4 0 4</u>

	48:11–14	32 21 11
48:15 For this one / is God, our God /	_15 2_	<u>4 4 0</u>
	48:12–15a	26 18 8
Forever and ever //	_7 1_	<u>2 2 0</u>
	48:7–15b	67 44 23
He indeed / will guide us till death* //	<u>13 2</u>	<u>4 0 4</u>
	48:12–15	32 20 12
	48:1–15	111 73 38

Scansion SAS Units: (5.8).(3.3).(4.3).(3.3).(3.4).(3.3).(8.5)

$$(13 + 6 + 7) + 6 + (7 + 6 + 13) = \mathbf{26} + 6 + \mathbf{26} = 58$$

Concentric Compositional Formula: 111 = 55 + 1 + 55 [word count—with heading]

Notes:

- 48:1^a Reading the sequence of *mērəkā* followed by *munaḥ* in Letteris as disjunctive. BHS has *gereš* on the word *mizmôr* (“psalm”).
- 48:11^a Reading a conjunctive here; Ginsburg and Letteris have *mehuppaḳ leḡarmēh* whereas BHS has only *mehuppaḳ*.
- 48:11^b Reading *deḥi* in BHS as conjunctive.
- 48:14^a Reading *ʾazla leḡarmēh* in BHS as conjunctive.
- 48:15^a Reading *māweṭ* (“death”) in place of *mûṭ* in BHS (cf. Vulg. *in mortem*) to improve balance in mora-count.

Summary of the Logoprosodic Analysis

1. Psalm 48:1–15 has seven strophes: 48:1–4, 5–6, 7–8, 9, 10–11, 12, and 13–15:

A	48:1–4	2 balanced triads + pivot:	[11 + 17 + 14] + 14 + [12 + 6 + 22]	=	42 + 14 + 40	mora
B	48:5–6	2 balanced dyads:	[16 + 8] + [16 + 9]	=	24 + 25	mora
C	48:7–8	2 balanced dyads:	[13 + 9] + [8 + 12]	=	22 + 20	mora
X	48:9	2 balanced dyads:	[16 + 12] + [10 + 18]	=	28 + 28	mora
C	48:10–11	2 balanced dyads + pivot:	[13 + 9] + 8 + [12 + 12]	=	22 + 8 + 24	mora
B	48:12ab	balanced dyad:	[7 + 7]	=	7 + 7	mora
	48:12cd	balanced dyad:	[8 + 9]	=	8 + 9	mora
A	48:13–14	2 balanced triads:	[16 + 10] + 12 + [12 + 15]	=	26 + 12 + 27	mora
	48:15	balanced dyad + pivot:	[15 + 7 + 13]	=	15 + 7 + 13	mora

2. The 1st strophe (48:1–4) is a single part with five subdivisions: 48:1, 2, 3a, 3bc and 4.

- 47:8–48:1 **32** words
- 47:7–48:2 **46** (= **23** x 2) words and **34** (= **17** x 2) before *atnach*
- 48:1–3 **17** words before *atnach*

- 48:2–4 **17** words before *atnach*
3. The 2nd strophe (48:5–6) is a single part with two subdivisions: 48:5 and 6.
 - 48:1–5 **34** (= **17** x 2) words
 - 47:10–48:6 **52** (= **26** x 2) words
 4. The 3rd strophe (48:7–8) is a single part with two subdivisions: 48:7 and 8.
 - 48:5–7 **17** words
 - 48:1–7 **32** words
 - 48:1–8 **34** (= **17** x 2) words before *atnach*
 5. The 4th strophe (48:9) is a single part with two subdivisions: 48:9ab and 9cd.
 - 48:1–9 **64** (= **32** x 2) words
 6. The 5th strophe (48:10–11) is a single part with three subdivisions: 48:10, 11a and 11bc.
 - 48:1–10 **69 = 46 + 23** [compositional formula, all three divisible by **23**]
 - 48:1–11 **26** words after *atnach*
 7. The 6th strophe (48:12) is a single part with two subdivisions: 48:12ab and 12cd.
 - 48:10–12 **23** words
 8. The 7th strophe (48:13–15) is a single part with five subdivisions: 48:13, 14a, 14bc, 15a, 15b and 15c.
 - 48:11–13 **23** words
 - 48:11–14 **32** words
 - 48:12–15 **32** words
 - 48:1–14 **34** (= **17** x 2) words after *atnach*

Observations

1. The seven strophes in Psalm 48 may be outlined in a menorah pattern, which is determined primarily on prosodic grounds, as follows:

A	Great is YHWH and Mount Zion is the city of the Great King	[5.8]	48:1–4
B	Other kings see and hurry away terrified	[3.3]	48:5–6
C	They tremble like the east wind that shatters ships of Tarshish	[4.3]	48:7–8
X	YHWH has established the city of our God forever	[3.3]	48:9
C'	Your covenant-love extends to the ends of the earth	[3.4]	48:10–11
B'	Let Mount Zion rejoice because of your judgments	[3.3]	48:12
A'	Observe and escribe Zion for posterity for God is our guide forever	[8.5]	48:13–15
2. In terms of the 111 words in Psalm 48, the **arithmological center** falls on the word יהוה, “YHWH,” in 48:9a, with 55 words on either side. Since this psalm is a Zion Hymn about YHWH’s kingship in Jerusalem, this single word could be considered a **meaningful center**. The initial **concentric compositional formula** is:

$$111 = 55 + 1 + 55 \quad [\text{word count—with heading in 48:1}]$$

A larger “meaningful context” for the **arithmological center** is found by including three words on either side, as follows:

	כֵּן רֵאִינוּ	So we see—
	בְּעִיר יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת	in the city of YHWH of Hosts,
	בְּעִיר אֱלֹהֵינוּ	in the city of our God.

In this instance the **concentric compositional formula** becomes:

$$111 = 52 + 7 + 52 \quad [\text{word count—with heading in 48:1}]$$

According to Craigie, “the sight the horrified kings saw was the sight that thrilled the eyes of pilgrims as they approached the city of Jerusalem (v 9). What they perceived was not an impregnable fortress keeping them out, but a city permanently established by God, offering them joy and protection” [*Psalms 1–50*. Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 19 (1983), p. 354]. The seven words in this proposed **meaningful center** highlight the message of Psalm 48.

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

	תִּשְׁבֵּר אֲנוֹת תַּרְשִׁישׁ	It shatters the ships of Tarshish
9	כַּאֲשֶׁר שָׁמַעְנוּ כֵּן רֵאִינוּ	As we have heard so have we seen
	בְּעִיר יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת	In the city of YHWH of Hosts,
	בְּעִיר אֱלֹהֵינוּ	In the city of our God.
	יְכוֹנֵנָה עַד עוֹלָם סֵלָה	God establishes it forever, Selah.

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

$$111 = 47 + 17 + 47 \quad [\text{word count—with heading in 48:1}]$$

3. The 38-word **meaningful framework**, with the 14-word framework highlighted in gray, reads as follows:

1	שִׁיר מִזְמוֹר לְבְנֵי־קֹרַח	A song, a psalm, for the sons of Korah,
2	גִּדּוֹל יְהוָה וּמִהַלֵּל מְאֹד	Great is YHWH and to be praised exceedingly.
	בְּעִיר אֱלֹהֵינוּ הַר־קֹדֶשׁוֹ	In the city of our God is his holy mountain.
3	יִפְהַ נּוֹף מְשׁוֹשׁ כָּל־הָאָרֶץ	It is beautiful in its loftiness, the joy of all the earth,
	הַר־צִיּוֹן	Mouny Zion.
14	שִׂיתוּ לְבַבְכֶם לְחִילָהּ	Mark well its fortress
	פְּסוּגוֹת אֲרָמֹנוֹתֶיהָ	Consider her palaces
	לְמַעַן תְּסַפְּרוּ לְדוֹר אַחֲרוֹן	That you may describe it to the next generation
15	כִּי זֶה אֱלֹהִים	For this one is God (<i>Elohim</i>);
	אֱלֹהֵינוּ עוֹלָם וָעֶד	Our God is forever and ever
	הוּא יְנַהֵגנוּ עַל־מוֹת	He indeed will guide us till death.

4. Summary of the concentric compositional formulae:

111 = 52 + 7 + 52 word-count

111 = 47 + 17 + 47

{with others in between}

111 = 10 + 91 + 10

111 = 4 + 103 + 4

58 = **26** + 6 + **26** SAS units

38 = **17** + 4 + **17** **briques** (primary SAS units)

5. In the prosodic structure of Psalm 48 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*.
- **Oleh 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 48 has 38 **briques**, 30 of which are marked: by *soph pasuq* (15 times, at the end of each verse), *atnach* (14 times, in each verse, except v. 1), and *oleh weyored* (v. 3). The boundaries of the eight remaining **briques** are marked by *revia* (4 times, in vv. 4, 9, 12 and 14), *revia mugrash* (twice, in vv. 12 and 14), *dehi* (v. 15) and *sinnor* (v. 3).

6. The prosodic structure of Psalm 48, in terms of its **briques** (primary SAS units), may be displayed as follows: ^ represents *atnach*; : represents *soph pasuq*; ‡ represents *oleh weyored*; and † represents all other accent markers.

I A ¹ šîr mizmôr libnê qōrah :

² gādôl yhw̄h ûmêhullâl mæʔōd ^

bæʕîr ʔêlôhênû har qodšô :

	³ <i>yəpēh nōp</i> † <i>har šīyyôn yarkəṭē šāpôn</i> ^	<i>məšós kol hāʾāreš</i> † <i>qiryat melek rāb</i> :
	⁴ <i>ʾēlōhīm bəʾarmənōṭēhā</i> †	<i>nōda</i> † <i>ləmišgāb</i> :
B	⁵ <i>kī hinnēh hammelākīm nōʾādū</i> ^	<i>ʿābərū yaḥdāw</i> :
	⁶ <i>hēm māh rāʾū kēn tāmāhū</i> ^	<i>nīḥālū neḥpāzū</i> :
C	⁷ <i>rəʿādāh ʾāḥāzātam šām</i> ^	<i>ḥīl kayyōlēdāh</i> :
	⁸ <i>bərūah qādīm</i> ^	<i>təšabbēr ʾōnīyōt taršīš</i> :

II	X	⁹ <i>kaʾāšer šāmaʿnū kēn rāʾnū</i> † <i>bəʾīr ʾēlōhēnū</i> ^	<i>bəʾīr</i> <i>yhwh</i> <i>šəbāʾōt</i> <i>ʾēlōhīm yəḵônənehāʿad ʿōlām</i> <i>selāh</i> :
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C	¹⁰ <i>dimmīnū ʾēlōhīm ḥasdekā</i> ^	<i>bəqereḥ hēkālēkā</i> :
	¹¹ <i>kəšīmḳā ʾēlōhīm kēn təhillotḳā ʿal qašwē ʾereš</i> ^ <i>šedeq māləʾāh yəmīnekā</i> :	
B	¹² <i>yīsmāḥ har šīyôn</i> † <i>ləmaʿan</i> †	<i>tāḡēlənāh bənōt yəḥūdāh</i> ^ <i>mišpāṭēḳā</i> :
A	¹³ <i>sōbū šīyôn wəhaqqīpūhā</i> ^	<i>siprū miḡdālēhā</i> :
	¹⁴ <i>šīṭū libbəkem ləḥēlāh</i> † <i>ləmaʿan təsappərū</i> †	<i>passəḡū ʾarmənōṭēhā</i> ^ <i>ləḏôr ʾaḥārôn</i> :
	¹⁵ <i>kī zeh ʾēlōhīm ʾēlōhēnū</i> † <i>ʿōlām wāʿed</i> ^ <i>ḥūʾ yənahḡēnū ʿal mūt</i> :	

7. The 38 **briques** are distributed within 5 strophes in Psalm 48 as follows:

$$(9 + 4 + 4) + 4 + (4 + 4 + 9) = 17 + 4 + 17 = 38$$

The **arithmological center** of Psalm 48 falls on the word *yhwh* (“YHWH”) in 48:9a, with 55 words on either side, which may be subdivided into two groups (see Observation 3 above):

$$111 = (32 + 23) + 1 + (23 + 32) \text{ words}$$

Psalm 48 has 58 SAS units, 38 **briques** (primary SAS units), 16 versets and 5 strophes. The **arithmological center** is in the middle strophe, the middle two versets, the middle **brique**, and the middle two SAS units. There are 424 morae in Psalm 48—with 206 morae before the word *yhwh* (“YHWH”) in 48:9a and 214 morae after it.

8. Terrien finds five strophes in Psalm 48 (*The Psalms* [2003], pp. 379–80). Labuschagne and Van der Lugt find 5 strophes; and Fokkelman has 9 strophes. The logoprosodic analysis indicates that there seven strophes in two cantos (vv. 1–8 and 9–15).

Christensen	Terrien	Van der Lugt
I A 48:1–4	Heading (v. 1)	Heading (v. 1)
	1 48:2–4	I 1 48:2–4
B 48:5–6	2 48:5–7	II 2 48:5–7
C 48:7–8		
II X 48:9	3 48:8–9	3 48:8–9
C' 48:10–11	4 48:10–12	III 4 48:10–12
B' 48:12		
A' 48:13–15	5 48:13–15	5 48:13–15

9. The evidence from the logoprosodic supports the inclusion of the 4-word heading as an integral part of Psalm 48 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:

48:1–3	17	words before <i>atnach</i>
48:1–5	34	(= 17 x 2) words
48:1–6	40	words
48:1–7	32	words before <i>atnach</i>
48:1–8	34	(= 17 x 2) words before <i>atnach</i>
48:1–9	64	(= 32 x 2)
48:1–10	69	= 46 + 23 [compositional formula]
48:1–11	26	words after <i>atnach</i>
48:1–13	92	(= 23 x 4) words
48:1–14	34	(= 17 x 2) words after <i>atnach</i>

It is not possible to utilize any of the four compositional numbers (**17**, **23**, **26** and **32**) until the end of v. 3, which leaves 13 possible boundaries to work with. In 9 out of 13 of these boundaries (or more than 69% of the time) a multiple of one of these four compositional numbers is present. If the number 40 is included, the percentage increases to almost 77% (10 out of 13). This evidence suggests the possibility of deliberate design at the point of the numerical composition of Psalm 48.

10. Determining the details of the musical and literary structures of Psalm 48 as a whole calls for input on the part of others in the BIBAL Forum, 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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