

Psalm 57:1–12

Translation, Logoprosodic Analysis, and Observations

Prayer for God to Rise Up in Glory

Ps 57:1–12

A. *David's Miktam When He Fled Before Saul—"Do Not Destroy!"* (57:1) [2.2]

57:1	For the music director, "Do Not Destroy" / belonging to David, a <i>Miktam</i> //	9 1	3 3 0
		<u>7 1</u>	<u>2 2 0</u>
		56:14–57:1b	17 15 2
	When he fled from before Saul / into the cave //	<u>18 2</u>	<u>4 0 4</u>
		56:9–57:1	56 33 23

B. *Have Mercy on Me, for I Take Refuge in the Shadow of Your Wings* (57:2) [4.4]

57:2	Have mercy on me, O God / have mercy on me /	<u>15 2</u>	<u>3 3 0</u>
		56:10–57:2a	55 34 21
	For in you / my soul takes refuge //	<u>13 2</u>	<u>4 4 0</u>
		56:13–57:2b	34 25 9
	And (I am) in the shadow of your wings /	<u>11 1</u>	<u>2 2 0</u>
		56:11–57:2c	50 34 16
	I take refuge //	<u>2 1</u>	<u>1 1 0</u>
		56:12–57:2d	45 32 13
	Until / the storm of destruction passes by //	<u>8 2</u>	<u>3 0 3</u>
		56:14–57:2	34 25 9

C. *I Call to God to Save Me and to Put My Enemies to Shame* (57:3–4b) [4.4]

57:3	I call / to God the Most High One // to God / who will fulfill his purpose for me //	12 2	3 3 0
		<u>12 2</u>	<u>3 0 3</u>
		56:13–57:3	46 31 15
57:4	He will send from heaven / and he will save me // he will put to shame those who trample upon me / ^a Selah //	16 2	3 3 0
		<u>10 2</u>	<u>3 3 0</u>
		57:1–4a	34 24 10

D. God Sends His Covenant-Love to Deliver Me from Mortal Danger (57:4c–5) [6.4]

	God will send forth / his covenant-love and his faithfulness //	<u> 15 2 </u>	<u> 4 0 4 </u>
		56:14–57:4	40 34 16
57:5	My soul is / in the midst of lions /	<u> 10 2 </u>	<u> 3 3 0 </u>
		57:2–5a	32 22 10
	I lie down / (with) consumers of human prey //	<u> 15 2 </u>	<u> 4 4 0 </u>
		57:3–5b	23 16 7
	Their teeth / are spears and arrows //	<u> 11 2 </u>	<u> 3 3 0 </u>
		57:3–5c	26 19 7
	And their tongues / a sharp sword //	<u> 12 2 </u>	<u> 3 0 3 </u>
		57:1–5	51 34 17

E. Be Exalted, O God, and Let Them Fall into Their Own Snare (57:6–7) [4.6]

57:6	Be exalted above the heavens / ^a O God //	14 2	4 4 0
	above / all the earth be your glory //	<u> 12 2 </u>	<u> 4 0 4 </u>
		57:3–6	37 23 14
57:7	A net / they set for my feet / my soul is bowed down //	<u> 18 3 </u>	<u> 5 5 0 </u>
		57:1–7b	26 19 7
	They dig in front of me a pit //	12 1	3 3 0
	they fall into it / ^a Selah //	<u> 12 2 </u>	<u> 3 0 3 </u>
		57:3–7	48 31 17

F. I Sing God's Praise with the Lyre and the Harp (57:8–9) [4.4]

57:8	My heart is steadfast, O God / my heart is steadfast //	19 2	5 5 0
	I will make song / and I will chant praise //	<u> 13 2 </u>	<u> 2 0 2 </u>
		57:6–8	26 17 9
57:9	Awake, O my glory / awake / with the lyre and harp /	21 3	5 5 0
	I will wake up at dawn //	<u> 9 1 </u>	<u> 2 2 0 </u>
		57:1–9	84 58 26

G. I Praise You, O Lord, Among the Nations for Your Covenant-Love (57:10–11) [4.4]

57:10 I will thankfully praise you ^a among the peoples / O Lord //	14	2	3	3	0
<and> ^b I will chant your praise / ^c among the nations ^c //	9	2	3	0	3
57:5–10			52	37	15
57:11 For great / ^a to the heavens is your covenant-love //	14	2	5	5	0
and to the skies / ^b is your faithfulness //	11	2	3	0	3
57:6–11			47	32	15

H. Be Exalted, O God, in Glory Over All the Earth (57:12) [2.2]

57:12 Be exalted above the heavens / ^a O God //	14	2	4	4	0
57:8–12a			32	24	8
Over / all the earth be your glory //	12	2	4	0	4
57:2–12			97	65	32
57:1–12			106	70	36

Scansion in SAS Units: (2.2).(4.4).(4.4) . (4.6).(6.4) . (4.4).(4.4).(2.2)
 (4 + 8 + 8) + (10 + 10) + (8 + 8 + 4) = 20 + 20 + 20 = 60

Concentric Compositional Formula: 106 = 53 + 0 + 53 [word count—with heading & *bal-’ummim*]

Notes:

- 57:4^a Reading two consecutive occurrences of *munaḥ* in BHS as disjunctive.
- 57:6^a Reading two consecutive occurrences of *munaḥ* in BHS as disjunctive.
- 57:7^a Reading *munaḥ* preceded by *mehuppak leḡarmeh* in BHS as disjunctive.
- 57:7^b Reading the sequence of *tarḥâ* followed by *munaḥ* in BHS as disjunctive.
- 57:10^a Reading two consecutive occurrences of *munaḥ* plus *pāsēq* (and two occurrences of *gaʿya* (= *meteg*]) in Letteris as disjunctive. BHS has *mēreka* plus *pāsēq*.
- 57:10^b Adding *wau*-conjunction with many Hebrew Mss, Vulgate and Syriac (cf. Ps 108:4) to improve balance in terms of mora-count
- 57:10^{c-c} See Observation 2 below.
- 57:11^a Reading two consecutive occurrences of *munaḥ* in BHS as disjunctive.
- 57:11^b Reading *mēreka* preceded immediately by *gaʿya* (= *meteg*) in BHS as disjunctive.
- 57:12^a Reading two consecutive occurrences of *munaḥ* in BHS as disjunctive.

Summary of the Logoprosodic Analysis

1. Psalm 57 has eight strophes: 57:1, 2, 3–4, 5, 6, 7, 8–9, 10–11 and 12

I	A	57:1	balanced dyad:	$[(9 + 7) + 18]$	=	16 + 18	morae
	B	57:2	balanced dyad:	$[15 + 13]$	=	15 + 13	morae
			balanced dyad:	$[11 + (2 + 8)]$	=	11 + 10	morae
	C	57:3–4b	2 balanced dyads:	$(12+12) + (16 + 10)$	=	24 + 26	morae

II	D	57:4c–5b	balanced dyad + pivot:	$[15 + 10 + 15]$	=	15 + 10 + 15	morae
		57:5cd	balanced dyad:	$[11 + 12]$	=	11 + 12	morae
	D'	57:6–7	balanced dyad:	$[14 + 12] + 18 + [12 + 12]$	=	26 + 18 + 24	morae

III	C'	57:8–9	2 balanced dyads:	$[19 + 13] + [21 + 9]$	=	32 + 30	morae
	B'	57:10–11	2 balanced dyads:	$[14 + 9] + [14 + 11]$	=	23 + 25	morae
	A'	57:12	balanced dyad:	$[14 + 12]$	=	14 + 12	morae

- The 1st strophe (57:1–2) is a single part with two subdivisions: 57:1ab and 1c.
 - 56:9–57:1 **23** words
- The 2nd strophe (57:2) has two parts with five subdivisions: 57:2a, 2b, 2c, 2d and 2e.
 - 56:14–57:2 **34** (= **17** x 2) words
- The 3rd strophe (57:3–4b) is a single part with two subdivisions: 57:3 and 4ab.
 - 56:13–57:3 **46** (= **23** x 2) words
 - 57:1–4a **34** (= **17** x 2) words
- The 4th strophe (57:4c–5) has two parts with five subdivisions: 57:4c, 5a, 5b, 5c and 5d.
 - 56:14–57:4 **34** (= **17** x 2) words
 - 57:1–5 **51** = **34** + **17** [compositional formula]
- The 5th strophe (57:6–7) is a single part with three subdivisions: 57:6, 7a and 7bc.
 - 57:3–6 **23** words before *atnach*
 - 57:3–7 **17** words after *atnach*
- The 6th strophe (57:8–9) is in a single part with two subdivisions: 57:8 and 9.
 - 57:6–8 **26** words and **17** words before *atnach*
 - 57:1–9 **26** words after *atnach*
- The 7th strophe (57:10–11) is in a single part with two subdivisions: 57:10 and 11.
 - 57:5–10 **52** (= **26** x 2) words
 - 57:6–11 **32** words before *atnach*
- The 8th strophe (57:12) is in a single part with two subdivisions: 57:12a and 12b.
 - 57:6–11 **32** words before *atnach*
 - 57:2–12 **32** words after *atnach*

Observations

1. The eight strophes in Psalm 57 may be outlined in a menorah pattern, which is determined primarily on prosodic grounds, as follows:

A	Heading: a <i>miktam</i> when David fled before Saul—"Do not destroy!"	[2.2]	57:1
B	Have mercy, O God, for I take refuge in the shadow of your wings	[4.4]	57:2
C	I call to God to save me and to put my enemies to shame	[4.4]	57:3–4b
X	God delivers me from mortal danger—be exalted, O God!	[6.4.4.6]	57:4c–7
C'	I sing God's praise with the lyre and harp	[4.4]	57:8–9
B'	I praise you, O Lord, among the nations for your covenant-love	[4.4]	57:10–11
A'	Be exalted, O God, in glory over all the earth	[2.2]	57:12

2. In 57:10 the words בל-אמים [see also 44:15, 108:4 and 149:7] are combined in a single word in many Hebrew Mss and printed editions [including van der Hooght (1850), Letteris (1869), Ginsburg (1894), and Snaith (1970)], with the meaning of "among the nations." This change reduces the word-count by one. The apparent misreading in Codex L is a strange one, for it appears four times and the meaning of the text in each instance remains clear to virtually all readers. Most commentators do not even mention the problem. Leslie Allen was the only one I found so far who says anything at all. He says: "For the *maqeph* in MT see *BHS*" (WBC 21 [1983], p. 67). Since no one seems to have any trouble in terms of the meaning of the words in the text, this is an instance where the principle of *lectio difficilior* suggests that the reading in Codex L is apparently correct. The only function seems to be that of providing an extra word in the count.
3. If MT is taken as it stands in BHS, there are 106 words in Psalm 57. The **arithmological center** falls between the words על השמים in verse 6, with 52 words on either side. The initial **concentric compositional formula** is:

$$106 = 53 + 0 + 53 \quad [\text{word-count—including heading in 57:1}]$$

A **meaningful center** is found with two words on either side of the **arithmological center**, as follows:

אלהים על השמים רומה Be exalted above the heavens, O God!

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

$$106 = 51 + 4 + 51 \quad [\text{word-count—including heading in 57:1}]$$

This brief expression highlights the meaning of Psalm 57 as a whole, as God is exhorted to rise up above the heavens in demonstration of his glory [on the significance of the keyword "your glory" see Labuschagne's file on Psalm 57, Observation 2].

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

ולשונם חרב חדה רומה על השמים אלהים
 And their tongues are a sharp sword. Be exalted above the heavens, O God!

על כל-הארץ above all the earth.

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

$$106 = 48 + 10 + 48 \quad [\text{word-count—including heading in 57:1}]$$

4. The 30-word **meaningful framework** (with the 8-word framework highlighted in gray, the 16-word framework in yellow, and the 22-word framework in pink) reads as follows:

1	לִמְנַצֵּחַ אֶל־תִּשְׁחַת לְדָוִד	For the music director, “Do Not Destroy”, for David—
	מִכְתָּם	a <i>Miktam</i> .
	מִפְנֵי־שָׂאוֹל בַּמְעָרָה	When he fled from before Saul into the cave.
2	חַנּוּנֵי אֱלֹהִים חַנּוּנֵי	Have mercy on me, O God, have mercy on me
	כִּי בְךָ חָסִיָּה נַפְשִׁי	For in you my soul takes refuge.
11	גָּדֹל עַד־שָׁמַיִם חֶסֶדְךָ	Great to the heavens is your covenant-love
	וְעַד־שָׁחֳקִים אֱמֶתְךָ	And to the skies is your faithfulness
12	רוֹמָה עַל־שָׁמַיִם אֱלֹהִים	Be exalted above the heavens, O God;
	עַל כָּל־הָאָרֶץ כְּבוֹדְךָ	Over all the earth be your glory.

5. Summary of the concentric compositional formulae:

$$106 = 51 + 4 + 51 \quad \text{word-count}$$

$$106 = 48 + 10 + 48$$

{with others in between}

$$106 = 8 + 90 + 8$$

$$106 = 4 + 98 + 4$$

$$60 = 20 + 20 + 20 \quad \text{SAS units}$$

$$30 = 10 + 10 + 10 \quad \text{briques (primary SAS units)}$$

6. In the prosodic structure of Psalm 57, the basic building blocks (**briques**) in each poetic **verset** are the **primary SAS (syntactic accentual stress) units**. These sub-units are delineated by the Masoretes, who marked most of 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 57 has 32 **briques** (primary SAS units), 26 of which are marked by:

- *soph pasuq* 12 times, at the end of each verse
- *atnach* 11 times, in each verse except v. 9
- *oleh weyored* 3 times, in vv. 2, 5, 7.

The boundaries of the remaining **briques** are marked by:

- *rəḥîa^c* 4 times (vv. 2, 4, 9 [twice])
- *šinnôr* 2 times (vv. 5, 7)

7. The prosodic structure of Psalm 57, 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 *lamnaššēah ‘al tašḥēt ləḏāwīd miḵtām* ^
beḥorḥô mippənê-šā’ûl bammə‘ārāh :
- B ² *ḥonnēnî ‘ēlōhîm ḥonnēnî* † *kî ḥəkā ḥāsāyāh napšî* †
ûḇəšēl-kəḇāpēkâ ‘eḥseh ^ *‘ad ya‘ăḇôr hawwôt :*
- C ³ *‘eqrā’ lē’lōhîm ‘elyôn* ^ *lā’el gômēr ‘ālāy :*
⁴ *yīslah miššāmayim wəyôšî‘ēnî* † *ḥārēp šō’ăpî selāh* ^

II D	<i>yīslah ‘ēlōhîm ḥasdô wa’āmittô</i>	
	⁵ <i>napšî ḇəṭōk ləḇā’îm ‘eškəḇāh lōḥāṭîm</i> †	<i>bənê-‘ādām</i>
	<i>šinnēhem ḥānîṭ wəḥiṣṣîm</i> ^	<i>ûləšônām ḥereḇ ḥaddām :</i>
D	⁶ <i>nûmāh ‘al-haššāmayim</i> ‘ēlōhîm^	<i>‘al kol-hā’āreṣ kəḇôḏekā :</i>
	⁷ <i>rešet ḥēkînu lip‘āmay kāpāp napšî</i> †	<i>kārû ləpānay šîḥāh</i> ^
	<i>nāpəlû ḇəṭûkāh selāh :</i>	

- III C ⁸ *nāḵôn libbî ‘ēlōhîm nāḵôn libbî* ^ *‘āšîrāh wa’āzammērāh :*
⁹ *‘ûrāh kəḇôḏî* † *‘ûrāh hannēḇel wəḵinnôr ‘ā‘îrāh šāḥar :*
- B ¹⁰ *‘ôḏəkā ḇā‘ammîm ‘ăḏônāy* ^ *‘āzammerkâ bal-‘ummîm :*
¹¹ *kî-gādōl ‘ad-šāmayim ḥasdekā* ^ *wə‘ad-šəḥāqîm ‘āmitteḵā :*
- I A ¹² *rûmāh ‘al-šāmayim ‘ēlōhîm* ^ *‘al kol-hā’āreṣ kəḇôḏekā :*

Note that the word *selah* appears to be used to mark the boundaries between the three cantos here in Psalm 57 in a manner similar to that of Psalm 55, where the word also appears within the context of a verse in the Masoretic system (cf. Pss. 55:20 and 57:4).

8. The 32 **briques** are distributed in 8 strophes in Psalm 57 as follows:

$$(2 + 4 + 4) + (5 + 5) + (4 + 4 + 2) = 10 + 10 + 10 = 30$$

The **arithmological center** of Psalm 57 falls between the words *ʿal-haššāmayim* (“above the heavens”) in 57:6a, with a total of 53 words on either side. Psalm 57 has 60 SAS units, 30 **briques** (primary SAS units), 13 versets, and 3 strophes. The **arithmological center** is in the middle strophe, the middle verset, the middle two **briques**, and the middle two SAS units.

9. Terrien finds 2 parallel strophes [= cantos] in Psalm 57, each with a mirror-like structure of 2 sub-strophes and a refrain in its center, (*The Psalms* [2003], pp. 433–34). Van der Lugt and Labuschagne have six strophes; and Fokkelman has 8 strophes. The logoprosodic analysis indicates that there are eight strophes (as in Psalm 56); for Psalm 57 appears to be one of the few psalms without a single central strophe.

Christensen	Terrien	Van der Lugt	Fokkelman
I A 57:1	heading (v. 1)	heading (v. 1)	heading (v. 1)
B 57:2	I 1 57:2–3	I 1 57:2	1 57:2
C 57:3–4b	2 57:4–5	2 57:3–4	2 57:3–4
II D 57:4c–5	3 57:6	3 57:5–6	3 57:5
D' 57:6–7		II 4 57:7	4 57:6
			5 57:7
III C' 57:8–9	II 4 57:7–8	5 57:8–9	6 57:8–9
B' 57:10–11	5 57:9–11	6 57:10–12	7 57:10–11
A' 57:12	6 57:12		8 57:12

10. Counting from the beginning of Psalm 57 (including the 9-word heading and the two occurrences of *Selah* in verses 4 and 7) we find the following list of compositional numbers at the boundaries of the verses:

57:1–4b **34** (= **17** x 2) words [ending with *Selah*]
 57:1–5 **51** = **34** + **17** [word-count, all three numbers divisible by **17**]
 57:1–7 **46** (= **23** x 2) words before *atnach*
 57:1–8 **51** (= **17** x 3) words before *atnach* and **26** words after *atnach*
 57:1–9 **26** words after *atnach*
 57:1–11 **32** words after *atnach*

It is not possible to utilize any of the four compositional numbers (**17**, **23**, **26** and **32**) until the end of v. 2, which leaves 11 possible boundaries to work with. In 5 out of 11 of these boundaries (or 45.5% of the time) a multiple of one of these four compositional boundaries is present. If the boundary at v. 14b (ending with *Selah*) is substituted for the boundary at the end of v. 4, the percentage increases to 54.5%.

11. Determining the details of the larger musical and literary structure(s) in Psalm 57 as a whole calls for input on the part of the BIBAL Forum, as we consider further information contained in the *te'amim* and the rhetorical features of the text.

12. Bibliography:

- Auffret, P. "Note sur la structure littéraire du Psame LVII." *Sem* 27 (1977) 59–73.
_____. *Voyez de vos yeux ...* (Leiden, 1977) 58–73.
- Baumann, E. "Struktur-Untersuchungen im Psalter I." *ZAW* 61 (1945/48) 173–76.
- Beaucamp, E. and J. P. de Relles, "Psaume 57 (56), 8–12." *Feu nouveau* 9 (1966) 20–21.
- Beyerlin, W. *Die Rettung der Bedrängten*. FRLANT 99 (Göttingen, 1970) 129–37.
- Childs, B. S. "Psalm Titles and Midrashic Exegesis." *JSS* 16 (1971) 146.
- Goulder, M. D. *The Prayers of David (Psalms 51–72): Studies in the Psalter*, II. JSOTSup 102 (Sheffield, 1990) 116–26.
- McKay, J. W. "My Glory—A Mantle of Praise." *SJT* 31 (1978) 167–72.
- Raabe, P. R. *Psalm Structures: A Study of Psalms with Refrains*. JSOTSup 104 (Sheffield, 1990) 112–30.
- Schmidt, H. *Das Gebet der Angeklagten im Alten Testament*. BZAW 49 (Giessen, 1928) 21.
- Tournay, R. J. "Psalms 57, 60 et 108: Analyse et interpretation." *RB* 96 (1989) 5–26.

© 2005
Dr. D.L. Christensen Professor of Old Testament
845 Bodega Way Languages and Literature (retired),
Rodeo, California 94572 Graduate Theological Union
+1 510 799 0858 Berkeley, California
dlc @ bibal.net