

# Psalm 61:1–9

## Translation, Logoprosodic Analysis, and Observations

### Individual Lament: Prayer for Protection

Ps 61:1–9

#### A. *Superscription and Petition: Hear My Prayer, O God!* (61:1–2) [2.2]

61:1	For the music director <sup>a</sup> on the <i>Neginath</i> belonging to David //	<u>15 1</u>	<u>4 4 0</u>
		60:13–61:1	17 11 6
61:2	Hear, O God <sup>a</sup> my cry //	<u>13 1</u>	<u>3 3 0</u>
		60:10–61:a	46 29 17
	Pay attention / to my prayer //	<u>11 2</u>	<u>2 0 2</u>
		60:5–61:2	85 52 33

#### B. *My Heart Grows Faint so Lead Me to the Rock That Is Higher Than I* (61:3–4) [4.4]

61:3	From the end of the earth /	8 1	2 2 0
	to you I call <sup>a</sup> when my heart grows faint //	<u>15 1</u>	<u>4 4 0</u>
		60:7–61:3b	78 51 27
	To the rock that is higher / than I, lead me //	<u>16 2</u>	<u>4 0 4</u>
		60:13–61:3	32 20 12
61:4	For you have been / a refuge for me //	12 2	4 4 0
	a towered fortress / against the enemy //	<u>12 2</u>	<u>4 0 4</u>
		61:2–4	23 13 10

#### C. *I Find Refuge in the Shelter of Your Wings* (61:5–6) [4.4]

61:5	Let me abide in your tent / forever //	17 2	3 3 0
	I find refuge in the shelter / of your wings, <b>Selah</b> //	<u>16 2</u>	<u>4 0 4</u>
		61:1–5	34 20 14
61:6	For you indeed, O God / have heard my vows //	20 2	5 5 0
	you give me the heritage / of those who fear your name //	<u>14 2</u>	<u>4 0 4</u>
		61:3–6	34 18 16

#### D. *May the King's Life be Prolonged and His Throne Endure Forever* (61:7–8) [4.4]

61:7	May the days of the king's life / <sup>β</sup> be extended //	14 2	5 5 0
	may his years / be like many generations //	<u>14 2</u>	<u>4 0 4</u>
		61:3–7	43 23 20

61:8	May he be enthroned forever / in the presence of God //	16	2	4	4	0
	assign steadfast love and faithfulness / to safeguard him //	12	2	4	0	4
					<b>26</b>	
		61:6-8			14	12

**E. Vow of Praise: I Will Sing Praise to Your Name Forever (61:9) [2.2]**

61:9	Then will I sing praise to your name / <sup>a</sup> forever /	12	2	4	4	0
					<b>60</b>	
		61:2-9a			34	26
	Fulfilling my vows / day <sup>a</sup> after day //	13	2	4	0	4
					<b>34</b>	
		61:6-9			18	16
		61:1-9			<b>68</b>	30

Scansion in SAS Units: (2.2).(4.4) . **(4.4)** . (4.4).(2.2) = 12 + 8 + 12 = **32**

Concentric Compositional Formula: **68** = **34** + 0 + **34** [word-count with heading]

**Notes:**

- 61:1<sup>a</sup> Reading *illuy* plus *paseq* in BHS as conjunctive; the *paseq* is not present in Letteris.
- 61:2<sup>a</sup> Reading *dehi* in BHS as conjunctive.
- 61:3<sup>a</sup> Reading *azla legarmeh* in BHS as conjunctive.
- 61:4<sup>a</sup> Reading *munah* preceded by *ga'ya* (= *meteg*) in BHS and Letteris as disjunctive.
- 61:7<sup>a</sup> Reading *munah* preceded by *ga'ya* (= *meteg*) in Letteris as disjunctive.

## Summary of the Logotechnical Prosodic Analysis

1. Psalm 61:1-8 has five strophes: 61:1-4, 5-6, 7-9.

A	61:1	{the heading does not scan as part of the poem in terms of balance in mora-count}		
	61:2	balanced dyad:	[13 + 11]	= 13 + 11 morae
B	61:3-4	2 balanced dyads + pivot:	[8 + 15] + 16 + [12 + 12]	= 23 + 16 + 24 morae
X	61:5-6	2 balanced dyads + pivot:	[17 + 16] + [20 + 14]	= 33 + 34 morae
B'	61:7-8	2 balanced dyads:	[14 + 14] + [16 + 12]	= 28 + 28 morae
A'	61:9	balanced dyad:	[12 + 13]	= 12 + 13 morae

2. The 1<sup>st</sup> strophe (61:1-2) has two parts with three subdivisions: 61:1, 2a and 2b.

- 60:13-61:1 **17** words
- 60:5-61:2 **85** (= **17** x 5) words and **52** (= **26** x 2) words before *atnach*

3. The 2<sup>nd</sup> strophe (61:3–4) is a single part with three subdivisions: 61:3ab, 3c and 4.
  - 60:13–61:3      **32** words
  - 61:2–4          **23** words
  - 61:1–4          **17** words before *atnach*
4. The 3<sup>rd</sup> strophe (61:5–6) is a single part with three subdivisions: 61:5 and 6.
  - 61:1–5          **34** (=17 x 2) words
  - 61:3–6          **34** (=17 x 2) words
5. The 4<sup>th</sup> strophe (61:7–8) is a single part with two subdivisions: 61:7 and 8.
  - 61:3–7          **23** words before *atnach*
  - 61:2–7          **26** words before *atnach*
  - 61:6–8          **26** words
  - 61:5–8          **17** words before *atnach*
  - 61:2–8          **26** word after *atnach*
6. The 5<sup>th</sup> strophe (61:9) is a single part with two subdivisions: 61:9a and 9b.
  - 61:6–9          **34** (= 17 x 2) words

## Observations

1. The five strophes of Psalm 61 may be outlined in a menorah pattern, in which the structural center is marked with the word *Selah*:
 

A	Superscription and petition: Hear my prayer, O God!	[2.2] 61:1–2
B	My heart grows faint; lead me to the rock that is higher than I	[2.2] 61:3
C	You are my refuge—a towering fortress against the enemy	[2.2] 61:4
X	<b>I find refuge in the shelter of your wings, <i>Selah</i>.</b>	[4.4] 61:5–6
C	May the king’s life be prolonged for many generations	[2.2] 61:7
B	May he be enthroned forever	[2.2] 61:8
A	Vow of praise: I will sing praise to your name forever	[2.2] 61:9
2. In terms of the **68** (= 17 x 4) words in Psalm 61, the **arithmological center** falls between verses 5 and 6, with **34** (= 17 x 2) words on either side. The *Concentric Compositional Formula* is as follows:

$$68 = 34 + 0 + 34 \quad \text{[word-count—with 4-word heading]}$$

The **meaningful center** is found by including eight words on either side of the **arithmological center**, as follows:

אחסה בסתר כנפידך סלה	I will find refuge in the shelter of your wings, <i>Selah</i> .
כי אתה אלהים שמעת	For you, O God, have heard (me).

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

$$68 = 30 + 8 + 30 \quad [\text{word-count—without 4-word heading}]$$

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

מפני אויב		From the presence of the enemy,
אגורה באהלך עולמים		Let me abide in your tent forever.
אחסה בסתר כנפיך סלה		I will find refuge in the shelter of your wings, <i>Selah</i> .
כי אתה אלהים שמעת לנדרי		For you, O God, have heard my vows;
נתת ירשת יראי שמך		You have given me the heritage of those who fear your name.

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

$$68 = 25 + 18 + 25 \quad [\text{word-count—with 4-word heading included}]$$

3. The 14-word **meaningful framework** (with the 8-word framework highlighted in gray) reads as follows:

1	למנצח על־נגינת לדוד	For the music director, on the <i>neginath</i> for David,
	שמעה אלהים רנתי	Hear, O God, my prayer!
9	אזמרה שמך לעד	I will sing praise to your name forever,
	לשלמי נדרי יום יום	Fulfilling my vows day after day.

4. Summary of the concentric compositional formulae:

$$68 = 30 + 8 + 30 \quad \text{word-count}$$

$$68 = 25 + 18 + 25$$

{with others in between}

$$68 = 7 + 54 + 7$$

$$68 = 4 + 60 + 4$$

$$32 = 12 + 8 + 12 \quad \text{SAS units}$$

$$18 = 7 + 4 + 7 \quad \text{briques (primary SAS units)}$$

5. In the prosodic structure of Psalm 61, 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 61 has 18 **briques** (primary SAS units), 17 of which are marked by:

- *soph pasuq* 9 times, at the end of each verse
- *atnach* 8 times, in each verse except v. 1

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

- *rəbîa<sup>c</sup>* 1 time (v. 9)

6. The prosodic structure of Psalm 61, 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 <sup>1</sup> *lamnaššēah ʿal-nəgīnaṭ ləḏāwīd :*

<sup>2</sup> *šim ʿāh ʾəlōhīm rinnāṭī ^ haqšīḇāh təḫillāṭī :*

B <sup>3</sup> *miqšēh hāʾāreṣ ʾəlēkā ʾeqrāʾ baʿāṭōḇ libbī ^*

*bəšûr-yārûm mimmennī ṭanḫēnī :*

<sup>4</sup> *kî-hāyîṭā maḥseh lî ^ miḡdal-ʿōz mippənē ʾōyēḇ :*

X <sup>5</sup> *ʾāḡûrāh ḥəʾāholkā ʿōlāmîm ^ ʾeḫṣeh ḥəsēṭer kənāḫēkā selāh :*

II <sup>6</sup> *kî-ʾattāh ʾəlōhīm šāmaʿtā lindārāy ^ nāṭatā yəruššaṭ yirʾē šəmeḵā :*

B' <sup>7</sup> *yāmîm ʿal-yəmə-melek tōsîḫ ^ šənôṭāyw kəmə-dōr wādōr :*

<sup>8</sup> *yēšēḇ ʿōlām lîpnē ʾəlōhīm ^ ḥesed weʾēmeṭ man yinšəruhū :*

A' <sup>9</sup> *kēn ʾāzammərah šimkā lāʿad ^ ləšalləmi nəḏāray † yôm yôm :*

7. The 18 **briques** are distributed in 5 strophes in Psalm 61 as follows:

$$(3 + 4) + 4 + (4 + 3) = 7 + 4 + 7 = 18$$

The **arithmological center** of Psalm 61 falls between vv. 5 and 6, with a total of 34 words on either side. Psalm 61 has 32 SAS units, 18 **briques** (primary SAS units), 8 versets, 5 strophes and 2 cantos. The **arithmological center** is between the two cantos, in the middle two strophes, the middle two versets, the middle two **briques**, and the middle two SAS units.

8. Terrien finds 2 strophes [= cantos] in Psalm 61 (*The Psalms* [2003], pp. 452–53). Van der Lugt, Labuschagne and Fokkelman all find 4 strophes. The logoprosodic analysis indicates that there are 5 strophes (arranged in three cantos: vv. 1–6, 7–8 and 9–14).

Christensen	Terrien	Van der Lugt & Labuschagne	Fokkelman
I A 61:1	Heading (v.1)	Heading (v.1)	Heading (v.1)
B 61:2–4	I 61:2–5	I 1 61:2–3	1 61:2–3
<u>X 61:5–6</u>		2 61:4–5	2 61:4–5
B 61:7–8	II 61:6–9	II 3 61:6–7	3 61:6–7
A' 61:9		4 61:8–9	4 61:8–9

9. Counting from the beginning of Psalm 61 we find the following list of compositional numbers at the verse boundaries:

61:1–4	<b>17</b> words before <i>atnach</i>
61:1–5	<b>34</b> (= <b>17</b> x 2) words
61:1–6	<b>43</b> [= <b>17+26</b> ] words
61:1–7	<b>52</b> (= <b>26</b> x 2) words
61:1–8	<b>34</b> (= <b>17</b> x 2) words before and <b>26</b> words after <i>atnach</i>
61:1–9	<b>68</b> (= <b>17</b> x 4) words

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 7 possible boundaries to work with. In 6 out of 7 of these boundaries (86% of the time) a multiple of one of these four numbers is present.

10. Determining the details of the larger musical and literary structure(s) of Psalm 61 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.

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