

Psalm 79:1-13

Translation, Logoprosodic Analysis, and Observations

National Lament on the Destruction of the Temple

Psalm 79:1–13

A. *The Nations Have Defiled Your Holy Temple* (79:1–2)

[7.5]

79:1	A psalm / belonging to Asaph //	<u>8</u> 2_	<u>2</u> 2 0
		78:66–79:1a	52 28 24
	O God / the goyim have come / into your inheritance /	<u>20</u> 3	<u>4</u> 4 0
		78:70–79:1b	26 18 8
	They have defiled the temple of your holiness //	11 1	4 4 0
	they have put Jerusalem to ruins //	<u>17</u> 1	<u>4</u> 0 4
		78:70–79:1	34 22 12
79:2	They have given / the corpses of your servants /	<u>14</u> 2_	<u>4</u> 4 0
		78:72–79:2a	24 17 7
	To be food ^a for the birds of the heavens //	<u>13</u> 1_	<u>3</u> 3 0
		79:1–2b	21 17 4
	The flesh of your saints / for the beasts of the earth //	<u>15</u> 2	<u>4</u> 0 4
		78:71–79:2	39 26 13

B. *We Are an Object of Scorn; How Long Will Your Anger Burn?* (79:3–5)

[7.4]

79:3	They have poured out their blood ^a like water //	12 1	3 3 0
	round about Jerusalem / and there is none to bury them //	<u>20</u> 2_	<u>4</u> 4 0
		79:1–3	32 24 8
79:4	We have become a gibe ^a to our neighbors //	16 2	3 3 0
	a scorn and a derision / to those around us //	<u>15</u> 2	<u>3</u> 0 3
		79:2–4	24 17 7
79:5	How long, O YHWH? / Will you be angry with us forever? //	<u>14</u> 2_	<u>5</u> 5 0
			43 32 11
	Shall it burn like fire / your jealousy? //	<u>12</u> 2	<u>4</u> 0 4
		79:1–5	47 32 15

C. *Request: Pour Out Your Wrath on the Nations Who Do Not Know You* (79:6) [2.3]

79:6	Pour out your wrath on the goyim /	12 1	4 4 0
	that have not known you //	<u>10</u> 1_	<u>3</u> 3 0
		78:69–79:6b	81 55 26

And upon the kingdoms //	7	1	2	2	0
that on your name / they have not called //	13	2	4	0	4
	79:4-6		28	17	11

D. They Have Laid Waste the Dwelling Place of Jacob (79:7-8) [3.2.3]

79:7 For / they have devoured ^a Jacob //	12	2	4	4	0
and his dwelling place they have laid waste //	_14	1_	3	0	3
	79:3-7		40	26	14

79:8 Do not remember against us / former iniquities //	_18	2_	5	5	0
	79:5-8a		34	23	11

Speedily / let your compassion come to us //	15	2	3	3	0
for we are brought very low //	10	1	3	0	3
	79:5-8		40	26	14

E. Request: Deliver Us and Purge Away Our Sins (79:9) [3.2]

79:9 Help us / O God of our salvation /	17	2	3	3	0
for the glory of your name //	_9	1_	4	4	0
	79:1-9a		85	60	25

Deliver us and purge away our sins /	20	1	4	0	4
for your name's sake //	6	1	2	0	2
	79:4-9		59	36	23

F. Why Should the Nations Gloat Over Our Destruction? (79:10-11) [4.7]

79:10 Why / should the goyim say / "Where is their God?" //	23	3	5	5	0
let it be known among the goyim in our sight //	_16	1_	3	3	0
	79:8-10a		32	23	9

It is avenged / the shed blood of your servants //	_14	2_	4	0	4
	79:1-10		103	68	35

79:11 Let it come before your face / the groans of the prisoners //	16	2	4	4	0
through the greatness of your arm //	9	1	2	2	0
preserve / those condemned to die //	12	2	3	0	3
	79:9-11		34	21	13

G. Punish Their Insults for We Are the Sheep of Your Pasture (79:12-13) [5.7]

79:12 Return ^a to our neighbors seven times / to their bosom //	23	3	5	5	0
their insults ^b with which they have insulted you, my Lord //	_18	2_	4	0	4
	79:9-12		43	26	17

79:13 And we are your people / the sheep of your pasture /	<u>16</u> 2_	<u>4</u> 4 0	
	79:10–13a	34 23 11	
We give thanks to you / forever //	<u>10</u> 2_	<u>3</u> 3 0	
	79:10–13b	37 26 11	
From generation to generation //	7 1	2 2 0	
we show forth / your praise //	<u>10</u> 2	<u>2</u> 0 2	
	79:6–13	85 56 29	
	79:1–13	132 88 44	

Scansion in Accentual Stress Units: (7.5).(7.4) . (2.3).(3.2.3).(3.2) . (4.7).(5.7)
 (12 + 11) + 18 + (11 + 12) = **23** + 18 + **23** = **64**
 or: 41 // 41

Concentric Compositional Formula: 132 = 66 + 0 + 66 [word-count—with heading]

Notes:

- 79:2^a Reading the *deḥî* in BHS as conjunctive.
- 79:3^a Reading *ʾazlā ləḡarmēh* in BHS as conjunctive.
- 79:4^a Reading the *deḥî* in BHS as conjunctive.
- 79:7^a Reading *ʾāḱəlû* (“they have devoured”) in place of *ʾāḱal* (“he devoured”) with many Hebrew Mss, the ancient versions, and Jer 10:25.
- 79:8^a Reading the *deḥî* in BHS as conjunctive.
- 79:12^a Reading the sequence of the two accents (*šinnōriṭ* and *məhuppāk*) on the same word in BHS as disjunctive.
- 79:12^b Reading the sequence of the two accents (*šinnōriṭ* and *məhuppāk*) on the same word in BHS as disjunctive.

Summary of the Logoprosodic Analysis

1. Psalm 79 has seven strophes: 79:1–2, 3–5, 6, 7–8, 9, 10–11 and 12–13.

A	79:1	2 balanced dyads:	(8 + 20) + (11 + 17)	= 28 + 28	morae
	79:2	balanced triad:	(14 + 13 + 15)	= 14 + 13 + 15	morae
B	79:3–4	2 balanced dyads:	(12 + 20) + (16 + 15)	= 32 + 31	morae
	79:5	balanced dyad	(14 + 12)	= 14 + 12	morae
C	79:6	2 balanced dyads	(12 + 10) + (7 + 13)	= 22 + 20	morae

X	79:7–8	2 balanced dyads + pivot:	(12+14) + 18 + (15 + 10)	= 24 + 18 + 25	morae
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C'	79:9	2 balanced dyads:	(17 + 9) + (20 + 6)	= 26 + 26	morae
B'	79:10–11	2 balanced dyads + pivot:	(23 + 16) + 14 + ([16+9] + 12)	= 39 + 14 + 37	morae
A'	79:12	balanced dyad + pivot:	(17 + 5 + 18)	= 17 + 5 + 18	morae
	79:13	balanced dyad + pivot:	(16 + 10 + [7+10])	= 16 + 10 + 17	morae

2. The first strophe (79:1–2) has two parts arranged in six subdivisions on the basis of word-count: 79:1a, 1b, 1cd, 2a, 2b and 2c.
 - 78:70–79:1 **34** (= **17** x 2) words
 - 78:71–79:2 **26** words before *atnach*

3. The second strophe (79:3–5) has two parts arranged in three subdivisions on the basis of word-count: 79:3, 4 and 5.
 - 79:1–3 **32** (= 2x2x2x2x2) words
 - 79:2–4 **17** words before *atnach*
 - 79:1–5 **32** (= 2x2x2x2x2) words before *atnach*

4. The third strophe (79:6) is a single part arranged in two subdivisions on the basis of word-count: 79:6ab and 6cd.
 - 79:4–6 **17** words before *atnach*
 - 79:2–6 **46** (= **23** x 2) words

5. The fourth strophe (79:7–8), the structural center of Psalm 79, is a single part arranged in three subdivisions on the basis of word-count: 79:7, 8a and 8bc.
 - 79:3–7 **26** words before *atnach*
 - 79:5–8 **26** words before *atnach*
 - 79:4–8 **46** (= **23** x 2) words and **17** words after *atnach*
 - 79:2–8 **64** (= 2x2x2x2x2x2) words
 - 79:1–8 **78** (= **26** x 3) words and **49** words before *atnach*

6. The fifth strophe (79:9) is a single part arranged in two subdivisions on the basis of word-count: 79:9ab and 9cd.
 - 79:4–9 **23** words after *atnach*

7. The sixth strophe (79:10–11) is a single part arranged in three subdivisions on the basis of word-count: 79:10ab, 10c and 11.
 - 79:4–9 **23** words after *atnach*
 - 79:3–10 **78** (= **26** x 3) words
 - 79:1–10 **68** (= **17** x 4) words before *atnach*
 - 79:9–11 **34** (= **17** x 2) words
 - 79:7–11 **52** (= **26** x 2) words
 - 79:6–11 **23** words after *atnach*
 - 79:2–11 **98 = 64 + 34** [compositional formula]

8. The seventh strophe (79:12–13) is a single part arranged in three subdivisions on the basis of word-count: 79:12, 13ab and 13cd.
 - 79:9–12 **43 = 26 + 17** [compositional formula]
 - 79:8–12 **34** (= **17** x 2) words before *atnach*
 - 79:7–12 **23** words after *atnach*
 - 79:4–12 **34** (= **17** x 2) words after *atnach*
 - 79:6–13 **85** (= **17** x 5) words

Observations

1. The seven strophes in Psalm 79:1–13 may be outlined in a menorah pattern, which is determined primarily on prosodic grounds, as follows:

Menorah Pattern: National Lament on the Destruction of the Temple (Psalm 79:1–13)

A	The <i>goyim</i> have defiled your holy temple	[7.5]	75:1–2
B	We are an object of scorn; how long will your anger burn?	[7.4]	75:3–5
C	Request: pour out your wrath on the <i>goyim</i> who do not know you	[2.3]	75:6
X	They have laid waste the dwelling place of Jacob	[3.2.3]	75:7–8
C'	Request: deliver us and purge away our sins	[3.2]	75:9
B'	Why should the <i>goyim</i> gloat over our destruction?	[4.7]	75:10–11
A'	Punish their insults for we are the sheep of your pasture	[5.7]	75:12–13

This psalm continues to be recited at the Western Wall (Wailing Wall) of the temple in Jerusalem on Friday afternoons and is used in the liturgy of the Ninth of Ab, a fast day commemorating the destruction of the temple. It is quoted in Rev 16:6 and 1 Thess 4:5.

2. In terms of the 132 words in Psalm 79, the **arithmological center** falls between the words נודהו השמו (“and his dwelling place they have laid waste”) in 79:7b, with 66 words on either side. The *Concentric Compositional Formula* is:

$$132 = 66 + 0 + 66 \quad \text{[word count—with heading]}$$

These two words constitute a **meaningful center** so that the *Concentric Compositional Formula* becomes:

$$132 = 65 + 2 + 65 \quad \text{[word count—with heading]}$$

or: 67 // 67 [word count with pivot in each half]

An expanded **meaningful center** is found by adding twelve words on either side of the **arithmological center**, as follows:

ועל ממלכות	And upon the kingdoms
אשר בשמך לא קראו	That on your name they have not called
כי אכל את יעקב	For they have devoured Jacob
ואת נודהו השמו	And his dwelling place they have laid waste
אל תזכר לנו עונת ראשנים	Do not remember against us former iniquities
מהר יקרמונו רחמיך	Speedily let your compassion come to us
כי דלונו מאד	For we are brought very low.

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

$$132 = 54 + 24 + 54 \quad \text{[word count—with heading]}$$

or: 78 // 78 [word count with pivot in each half]

{78 = 26 x 3}

The **meaningful center** may be expanded still further by adding nineteen words on either side of the **arithmological center**, as follows:

שפך חמתך אל הבוים	Pour out your wrath on the <i>goyim</i> ,
אשר לא ידעוך	That have not known you;
ועל ממלכות	And upon the kingdoms,
אשר בשמך לא קראו	That on your name they have not called.
כי אכל את יעקב	For they have devoured Jacob;
ואת נוהו השמו	And his dwelling place they have laid waste.
אל תזכר לנו עונת ראשנים	Do not remember against us former iniquities;
מהר יקדמונו רחמיך	Speedily let your compassion come to us,
כי דלונו מאד	For we are brought very low.
עזרנו אלהי ישענו	Help us, O God of our salvation,
על דבר כבוד שמך	For the glory of your name.

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

$$132 = 47 + 38 + 47 \quad \text{[word count—with heading]}$$

$$\text{or: } \mathbf{85 // 85} \quad \text{[word count with pivot in each half]}$$

$$\{\mathbf{85 = 17 \times 5}\}$$

3. Summary of the concentric compositional formulae:

$$132 = 65 + 2 + 65 \quad \text{or: } 67 // 67$$

$$132 = 54 + 24 + 54 \quad \text{or: } \mathbf{78 // 78} \quad \{\mathbf{78 = 26 \times 3}\}$$

$$132 = 47 + 38 + 47 \quad \text{or: } \mathbf{85 // 85} \quad \{\mathbf{85 = 17 \times 5}\}$$

{with others in between}

$$132 = 25 + 82 + 25 \quad \text{or: } 107 // 107$$

$$132 = 2 + 128 + 2 \quad \text{or: } \mathbf{130 // 130} \quad \{\mathbf{130 = 26 \times 5}\}$$

$$\mathbf{64} = \mathbf{23} + 18 + \mathbf{23} \quad \text{or: } 41 // 41 \quad \text{syntactic accentual-stress units}$$

$$\{\mathbf{64 = 32 \times 2}\}$$

$$39 = 13 + 13 + 13 \quad \text{or: } \mathbf{26 // 26} \quad \mathbf{briques} \text{ (primary accentual-stress units)}$$

4. In the prosodic structure of Psalm 79, the basic building blocks in each poetic verset are the **briques** (primary SAS 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*.
- **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 79 has 39 **briques**, 31 of which are marked by: *soph pasuq* (13 times, at the end of each verse), *atnach* (12 times, in each verse, except v. 3), and *ole weyored* (6 times, in vv. 1, 6, 8, 10, 11 and 13). The eight remaining boundaries are marked by: *rəḥîa^c* (4 times, in vv. 1, 2, 3 and 9), *rəḥîa^c muğraš* (v. 9), *šinnôr* (3 times, in vv. 6, 10 and 13)

5. The prosodic structure of Psalm 79 may be displayed as follows [^ represents *atnach*; : represents *soph pasuq*; † represents *ole weyored*, and † represents other accents]:

I	A	1	<i>mizmôr la^cāsāp[†]</i>		
			<i>ʔēlōhîm bāʔû gôyîm bənaḥălāteḳā[†]</i>	<i>ṭimməʔû ʔet hēḳal qodšekā[^]</i>	
			<i>śāmû ʔet yərûšālayim la^cîyîm :</i>		
		2	<i>nātənû ʔet niblat^c ʔbādêḳā[†]</i>	<i>maʔăḳāl la^côp[^] haššāmayim[^]</i>	
			<i>bəsar ḥăsîdêḳā laḥaytô ʔāreš :</i>		
	B	3	<i>šāpəḳû dāmām kamayim[†]</i>	<i>səḥîḇôt yərûšālayim wəʔēn qôḇēr :</i>	
		4	<i>hāyînu ḥerpāh lišḳēnēnu[^]</i>	<i>la^caḡ wāqeles liḥîḇôtēnu[^]</i>	
		5	<i>ʔad māh yhw̄h teʔēnaḇ lāneṣaḥ[^]</i>	<i>tiḇ^car kəmə ʔēš qinʔātelā :</i>	
	II	C	6	<i>šəpōḳ ḥəmoṭḳā ʔel haggôyîm[†]</i>	<i>ʔāšer lōʔ yəḏāʔūḳā[†]</i>
			<i>wəʔal mamlāḳôt[^]</i>	<i>ʔāšer bəšimḳā lōʔ qārāʔû :</i>	
	X	7	<i>kî ʔăḳal ʔet ya^căqôḇ[^]</i>	<i>wəʔet [nāwēhû hēšammû] :</i>	
		8	<i>ʔal tizkār lānu ʔwōnōṭ riʔšōnîm[†]</i>	<i>mahēr yəqaddəmûnu raḥāmêḳā[^]</i>	
			<i>kî ḏallônû məʔōḏ :</i>		

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