

Psalm 84:1-13

Translation, Logoprosodic Analysis, and Observations

A Psalm for Pilgrimage to Zion

Psalm 84:1–13

A. *Heading as Prelude: A Psalm of the Sons of Korah* (84:1–3) [3]

84:1	To the music director on the <i>Gittith</i> / belonging to the sons of Korah / ^a a psalm //	10 1	3 3 0
		<u>9 2</u>	<u>3 0 3</u>
		83:13–84:1	52 31 21

B. *My Soul Longs for the Courts of Yhwh's Dwelling Place* (84:1–3) [4.3]

84:2	How lovely are your dwelling places / O YHWH of hosts //	13 1	3 3 0
		<u>9 1</u>	<u>2 2 0</u>
		83:17–84:2	33 23 10

84:3	My soul * longs and even yearns / for the courts of YHWH //	14 1	4 4 0
		<u>8 1</u>	<u>2 2 0</u>
		84:1–3	17 14 3

	My heart and my flesh // they sing for joy / to the living God //	10 1	2 2 0
		<u>10 2</u>	<u>4 0 4</u>
		84:2–3	17 13 4

C. *Happy Are Those Who Dwell in Your House* (84:4–5) [5.7]

84:4	Even a bird / finds a house /	<u>11 2</u>	<u>4 4 0</u>
		84:2–4a	21 17 4

	And a swallow / a nest for herself /	<u>9 2</u>	<u>3 3 0</u>
		84:1–4b	30 23 7

	Where she can put her young //	<u>11 1</u>	<u>3 3 0</u>
		84:1–4c	33 26 7

	Near your altars / O YHWH of hosts // my king / and my God //	16 2	4 4 0
		<u>9 2</u>	<u>2 0 2</u>
		83:15–84:4	72 51 21

84:5	How blessed ^a are those who dwell in your House // they are ever / praising you, Selah //	12 1	3 3 0
		<u>11 2</u>	<u>3 0 3</u>
		84:4–5	22 17 5

D. Blessed Are Those Who Make Pilgrimage to Zion (84:6–9)					[(4.4).(4.4)]	
84:6	How blessed are those / whose strength is in you //	13	2	5	5	0
	(with) pilgrim-ways / in their hearts //	<u> 10</u>	<u> 2</u>	<u> 2</u>	<u> 0</u>	<u> 2</u>
		84:1–6		52	38	14
84:7	Passing through * the valley of Baca /	<u> 14</u>	<u> 1</u>	<u> 3</u>	<u> 3</u>	<u> 0</u>
		84:4–7a		32	25	7
	They make it an oasis //	10	1	2	2	0
	also with blessings / the early rain will cover it //	<u> 12</u>	<u> 2</u>	<u> 4</u>	<u> 0</u>	<u> 4</u>
		83:15–84:7		94	64	30
84:8	They will go / from strength to strength //	13	2	4	4	0
	(as each one) appears / ^a before God in Zion //	<u> 16</u>	<u> 2</u>	<u> 4</u>	<u> 0</u>	<u> 4</u>
		84:7–8		17	9	8
84:9	YHWH, God of hosts /	<u> 14</u>	<u> 1</u>	<u> 3</u>	<u> 3</u>	<u> 0</u>
		84:6–8a		27	17	10
	Hear my prayer //	9	1	2	2	0
	give ear O God of Jacob / ^a Selah //	<u> 18</u>	<u> 2</u>	<u> 4</u>	<u> 0</u>	<u> 4</u>
		84:1–9		78	52	26
E. Better Is a Day in Your Courts Than a Thousand Elsewhere (84:10–11)						[7.5]
84:10	Our shield / behold, O God //	15	2	3	3	0
	and look / upon the face of your anointed one //	<u> 13</u>	<u> 2</u>	<u> 3</u>	<u> 0</u>	<u> 3</u>
		84:2–10		78	52	26
84:11	For better is a day / ^a in your courts /	13	2	4	4	0
	than a thousand (elsewhere) //	<u> 5</u>	<u> 1</u>	<u> 1</u>	<u> 1</u>	<u> 0</u>
		84:3–11a		78	52	26
	I choose / standing at the threshold / of the house of my God //	18	3	4	4	0
	more than dwelling / in the tents of wickedness //	<u> 10</u>	<u> 2</u>	<u> 3</u>	<u> 0</u>	<u> 3</u>
		84:1–11		96	64	32
F. Yhwh Does Not Withhold Good from Those Who Walk Uprightly (84:12)						[3.4]
84:12	For Sun / and Shield / is YHWH-Elohim //	<u> 19</u>	<u> 3</u>	<u> 5</u>	<u> 5</u>	<u> 0</u>
				17	14	3
	Grace and glory / YHWH bestows //	<u> 14</u>	<u> 2</u>	<u> 4</u>	<u> 4</u>	<u> 0</u>
		84:9–12b		36	26	10
	He does not withhold good / from those who walk uprightly //	<u> 17</u>	<u> 2</u>	<u> 5</u>	<u> 0</u>	<u> 5</u>

G. **Postlude: Concluding Macarism to Those Who Trust in Yhwh** (84:13) [3]

84:13 O YHWH of hosts //	_ 9 1 _	_ 2 2 0	34 23 11
Blessed is the man /	_ 7 1 _	_ 2 0 2	45 28 17
The one who trusts in you //	_ 7 1	_ 2 0 2	55 32 23
	84:8–13		116
	84:1–13		75 41

Scansion in Accentual Stress Units: (3).(4.3).(7.5) . (8.8) . (5.7).(3.4).(3)
 $(3 + 7 + 12) + 16 + (12 + 7 + 3) = 22 + 16 + 22 = 60$
 or: 38 // 38 [with pivot counted in each half]

Concentric Compositional Formula: $116 = 58 + 0 + 58$ [word-count—with heading]

Notes:

- 84:1^a Reading *mêrəkâ* here in BHS as disjunctive.
- 84:3^a Reading a disjunctive here with the Ben Naftali tradition, which places a *ga'yā* (= *meteg*) under the word *wəḡam* (see Ginsburg, note on page 1248). BHS omits *ga'yā* (= *meteg*).
- 84:5^a Reading the *dəḥî* here in BHS as conjunctive.
- 84:8^a Reading *tarḥā* preceded by *ga'yā* (= *meteg*) in Letteris and Ginsburg as disjunctive. BHS omits the *ga'yā* (= *meteg*).
- 84:9^a Reading the *munaḥ* preceded immediately by *ga'yā* (= *meteg*) in Letteris and Ginsburg as disjunctive. BHS omits *ga'yā* (= *meteg*).
- 84:11^a Reading *mêrəkâ* preceded immediately by *ga'yā* (= *meteg*) in Letteris and Ginsburg as disjunctive; BHS omits *ga'yā* (= *meteg*).

Summary of the Logoprosodic Analysis

1. Psalm 84 has five strophes, which are framed by a prelude (v. 1) and a postlude (v. 13):
84:1–3, 4–5, 6–9, 10–11 and 12–13.

A	84:1	balanced dyad:	[10 + 9]	= 41 + 42	morae
B	84:2–3	3 balanced dyads:	[13 + 9] + [14 + 8] + [10 + 10]	= 22 + 22 + 20	morae
C	84:4a–c	balanced triad:	[11 + 9 + 11]	= 31 + 16 + 32	morae
	84:4d–5	2 balanced dyads:	[16 + 9] + [12 + 11]	= 25 + 23	morae
X	84:6–7	2 balanced dyads + pivot:	[13 + 10] + 14 + [10 + 12]	= 23 + 14 + 22	morae
	84:8–9	2 balanced dyads + pivot:	[13 + 16] + 14 + [9 + 18]	= 29 + 14 + 27	morae
C'	84:10–11	2 balanced dyads + pivot:	[15 + 13] + 18 + [17 + 10]	= 28 + 18 + 27	morae
B'	84:12	balanced dyad + pivot:	[19 + 14 + 17]	= 19 + 14 + 17	morae
A'	84:13	balanced triad:	[9 + 7 + 7]	= 9 + 7 + 7	morae

2. The first strophe (84:1–3) has two parts arranged in four subdivisions on the basis of word-count: 84:1, 2, 3ab and 3cd.
- 83:13–84:1 **52** (= **26** x 2) words
 - 84:17–84:2 **23** words before *atnach*
 - 84:2–3 **17** words
3. The second strophe (84:4–5) has two parts arranged in five subdivisions on the basis of word-count: 84:4a, 4b, 4c, 4de and 5.
- 84:15–84:4 **51** (= **17** x 3) words before *atnach*
 - 84:4–5 **17** words before *atnach*
4. The third strophe (84:6–9), the structural center of Psalm 84, is in two parts arranged in six subdivisions on the basis of word-count: 84:6, 7a, 7b, 8, 9a and 9b.
- 84:7–8 **17** words
 - 84:5–8 **17** words before *atnach*
 - 84:8–9 **17** words
 - 84:7–9 **26** words
 - 84:5–9 **17** words after *atnach*
 - 84:3–9 **23** words after *atnach*
 - 84:1–9 **78 = 52 + 26** [compositional formula—all three divisible by **26**]
5. The fourth strophe (84:10–11) is a single part arranged in three subdivisions on the basis of word-count: 84:10, 11a and 11b.
- 84:8–10 **23** words
 - 84:7–10 **32** (= 2x2x2x2x2) words and **17** words before *atnach*
 - 84:6–10 **17** words after *atnach*

- 84:3–10 **26** words after *atnach*
 - 84:2–10 **78 = 52 + 26** [compositional formula—all three divisible by **26**]
 - 84:9–11 **17** words before *atnach*
 - 84:7–11 **26** words before *atnach*
 - 84:5–11 **34** (= **17** x 2) words before and **23** words after *atnach*
 - 84:1–11 **96 = 64 + 32** [compositional formula (**32** = 2x2x2x2x2)]
6. The fifth strophe (84:12–13) has two parts arranged in six subdivisions on the basis of word-count: 84:12a, 12b, 12c and 13.
- 84:11–12 **26** words
 - 84:10–12 **32** (= 2x2x2x2x2) words
 - 84:9–12 **26** words before *atnach*
 - 84:7–12 **23** words after *atnach*
 - 84:1–12 **104 = 70 + 34** [compositional formula]
 - 84:11–13 **32** (= 2x2x2x2x2) words
 - 84:10–13 **23** words before *atnach*
 - 84:8–13 **55 = 32 + 23** [compositional formula—double *kabod* formula]
 - 84:5–13 **32** (= 2x2x2x2x2) words after *atnach*

Observations

1. The five strophes of Psalm 84, together with the prelude (v. 1) and postlude (v. 13), may be outlined in a menorah pattern, which is determined primarily on prosodic grounds, as follows:

A Psalm for Pilgrimage to the Temple (Psalm 84:1–14)

A	Heading as prelude—a psalm of the sons of Korah	[2.2] 84:1
B	My soul longs for the courts of Yhwh’s dwelling place	[5.3] 84:2–3
C	Happy are those who dwell in your House	[5.7] 84:4–5
X	Blessed are those who make pilgrimage to Zion	[9.9] 84:6–9
C’	Better is a day in your courts than a thousand elsewhere	[7.5] 84:10–11
B’	Yhwh does not withhold good from those who walk uprightly	[3.5] 84:12
A’	Concluding macarism—blessed is the one who trusts in Yhwh	[2.2] 84:13

2. In terms of the 116 words in Psalm 84, the **arithmological center** falls between the words **גַּם בְּרִכּוֹת** (“also [with] blessings”) in 84:7b, with 58 words on either side. The *Concentric Compositional Formula* is:

$$116 = 58 + 0 + 58 \quad \text{[word count—with heading]}$$

$$\{58 = 26 + 32\}$$

A candidate for the **meaningful center** is found by including three words on either side of the **arithmological center**, as follows:

מעין ישיתוהו A spring they make it
 גם ברכות יעטה מורה Also with blessings the early rain covers it

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

$$116 = 55 + 6 + 55 \quad \text{[word count—with heading]}$$

$$\text{or: } 61 // 61 \quad \text{[word count with pivot in each half]}$$

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

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

עוז לו בכך His power is in you
 מסלות בלבבם Highways (to Zion) are in their hearts
 עברי בעמק הבכא Passing through the valley of Baca
 מעין ישיתוהו A spring they make it
 גם ברכות יעטה מורה Also with blessings the early rain covers it
 ילכו מחיל אל חיל They go from strength to strength
 יראה אל אלהים בציון (Each one) appears before God in Zion

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

$$116 = 47 + 22 + 47 \quad \text{[word count—with heading]}$$

$$\text{or: } 69 // 69 \quad \text{[word count with pivot in each half]}$$

$$\{69 = 23 \times 3\}$$

3. Summary of the concentric compositional formulae (with heading included):

$$116 = 55 + 6 + 55 \quad \text{or: } 61 // 61$$

$$116 = 47 + 22 + 47 \quad \text{or: } 69 // 69$$

{with others in between}

$$116 = 11 + 94 + 11 \quad \text{or: } 105 // 105$$

$$116 = 6 + 104 + 6 \quad \text{or: } 110 // 110$$

$$60 = 22 + 16 + 22 \quad \text{or: } 38 // 38 \quad \text{syntactic accentual-stress units}$$

$$32 = 12 + 8 + 12 \quad \text{or: } 20 // 20 \quad \text{briques (primary accentual-stress units)}$$

4. In the prosodic structure of Psalm 84, 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 84 has 32 **briques**, 29 of which are marked by: *soph pasuq* (13 times, at the end of each verse), *atnach* (12 times, in each verse, except v. 2), and *ole weyored* (4 times, in vv. 2, 4, 11 and 12). The remaining three boundaries are marked by *rəḥîa*^c (v. 11), *rəḥîa*^c *mūgrāš*^ʿ (v. 12), and *pazer* (v. 4).

5. The prosodic structure of Psalm 84 may be displayed as follows [^ represents *atnach*; ; represents *soph pasuq*; † represents *ole weyored*, and † represents other accents]:

I A ¹ *lamnaṣēah ʿal haggittîm ^* *libnê qōrah mizmôr :*

² *mah yaḏîḏôṭ miškənoṭêkâ yhw̄h ṣəḇāʾôṭ :*

³ *niḵsəpāh wəḡam kāləṭāh napšî ləḥaṣrôṭ yhw̄h †* *libbî ûḇəsāri ^*
yərannənu ʿel ʿəl ḥāy :

B ⁴ *gam ṣippôr māṣəʾāh ḇayit †* *ûḏərôr qēn lāh ʾāšer šāṭāh ʿəprōḥêḥā †*
ʿet mizḇəḥôṭêkâ yhw̄h ṣəḇāʾôṭ ^ *malkî wəʾlōḥāy :*

⁵ *ʾāšrê yôšəḇê ḇêṭekâ ^* *ʿôḏ yəḥaləlûkâ selāh :*

II	X	⁶ <i>ʾāšrê ʾāḏām ʿôz lô ḇāk ^</i> <i>məsillôṭ biləḇāḇām :</i>
		⁷ <i>ʿôḇərəḇə ʾəʿemeq ḥabbākā maʿyān yašîṭîṭûḥû ^</i> <i>gam ḇəṛākôṭ yaʿteh môreh :</i>
		⁸ <i>yələḵû mēḥayil ʿel ḥāyil ^</i> <i>yērāʿeh ʿel ʿəlōḥîm ḇəšîyôn :</i>
		⁹ <i>yhw̄h ʿəlōḥîm ṣəḇāʾôṭ šimʿāh təḇillāṭî ^</i> <i>haʾāzînāh ʿəlōḥê yaʿāqôḇ selāh :</i>

III B ¹⁰ *māḡinnēnu rəʿeh ʿəlōḥîm ^* *wəḥabbēt pənê məšîḥekâ :*

¹¹ *kî tōḇ yôm ḇaḥšəṣērêkâ †* *mēʾālep †*

bāḥartî histôpēp bəḥēt ʾēlōhay ^ middûr bəʾohôlē rēša^c :

A ¹² *kî šemeš ûmāgēn yhwh ʾēlōhîm † hēn wəḵābôḏ yittēn yhwh ^*
lōʾ yimna^c tōb † lahōləḵîm bəṭāmîm :

¹³ *yhwh šəbāʾôṭ ^ ʾašrê ʾādām bōṭēah bāk :*

6. The 32 **briques** (primary accentual stress units) are distributed within five strophes in Psalm 84 as follows: 32 = (6 + 6) + 8 + (6 + 6) = 12 + 8 + 12). The **concentric compositional formula** (on the basis of primary stress units) is 20 // 20, with the central pivot included in each half.
7. The **arithmological center** of Psalm 84 falls between the words *gam bərākôt* (“also [with] blessings”) in 84:7b, with a total of 58 words on either side. Psalm 84 has 68 syntactic accentual-stress units, 36 **briques**, 13 verset, 5 strophes and 3 cantos. The **arithmological center** is in the middle canto, the middle strophe, the middle verset, and the middle two **briques** and the middle four syntactic accentual-stress units.
8. Terrien finds 3 strophes in Psalm 84, which correspond more or less to the three canto-divisions (*The Psalms: Strophic Structure and Theological Commentary* [Eerdmans, 2003], pp. 597–603). Van der Lugt, Labuschagne, and Fokkelman all find 7 strophes though they differ in matters of detail. The analysis presented here, which is based on balance in mora-count and the concentric pattern in the distribution of SAS units, indicates that there are 5 strophes arranged in 3 cantos.

Christensen	Terrien	Van der Lugt	Labuschagne
I A 84:1–3	Heading (v. 1)	Heading (v. 1)	Heading (v. 1)
	I 84:2–5	I 1 84:2–3	I 1 84:2–3
B 84:4–5		2 84:4	2 84:4–5
II X 84:6–9	II 84:6–10	3 84:5–6	II 3 84:6–7
		II 4 84:7–8	4 84:8–9
III B' 84:10–11		5 84:9–10	III 5 84:10
	III 84:11–13	6 84:11–12b	6 84:11–12
A' 84:12–13		7 84:12c–13	7 84:13

9. The second occurrence of the word *Selah* in Psalm 84 (end of verse 9) marks an interesting achievement in terms of total word-count in terms of the compositional formula:

84:1–9 **78 = 52 + 26** [all three numbers divisible by **26**]

Other interesting compositional formulae include:

84:2–10 **78 = 52 + 26** [all three numbers divisible by **26**]

84:3–11a **78 = 52 + 26** [all three numbers divisible by **26**]

84:1–11 **96 = 64 + 32** [all three numbers divisible by **32**]

84:2–12	104	= 70 + 34	{ 104 = 26 x 4 and 34 = 17 x 2}
84:8–13	55	= 32 + 23	[double <i>kabod</i> -number]

Note that Psalm 84 has an unusually high density of the four primary compositional numbers throughout its entirety.

10. Once again, the evidence from the logoprosodic analysis supports the inclusion of the three-word heading and the one usage of *selah* in the following list of compositional formulae counting from the beginning of Psalm 84:

84:1–3	23	words	
84:1–6	52	(= 26 x 2) words	
84:1–7	43	words before <i>atnach</i>	[43 = 17 + 26]
84:1–8	69	(= 23 x 3) words	
84:1–9	78	= 52 + 26	[compositional formula—all three divisible by 26]
84:1–11	96	= 64 + 32	[compositional formula—all three divisible by 32]

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 eleven possible boundaries to work with. In 5 out of 11 of these boundaries (or more than 45% of the time) a multiple of one of these four compositional numbers is present. If we include the number **43** (= **17** + **26**) at the end of verse 7 in the count, the percentage is more than 54% of the time. Moreover, two of these boundaries are marked by multiple numbers in which all three numbers in the compositional formula are divisible by **26** (v. 9) and **32** (v. 11). This evidence suggests the possibility of deliberate design at the point of the numerical composition of Psalm 84, including the 6-word heading and the two instances of the word *Selah*; for all of these numbers disappear if these eight words are not considered as integral to the psalm at the point of its numerical composition.

11. Determining the details of the musical and literary structures of Psalm 84 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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