

# Psalm 86:1–17

## Translation, Logoprosodic Analysis, and Observations

### Individual Lament of the King of Israel

### Psalm 86:1–17

#### A. *Hear My Prayer for I am Afflicted and Needy—Save Your Servant* (86:1–3) [7.6]

86:1	A prayer / belonging to David //	<u>  9  2</u>	<u>  2  2  0</u>
		85:10–86:1a	<b>34</b> 19 15
	Incline, O YHWH your ear /	<u> 10  1</u>	<u>  3  3  0</u>
		85:9–86:1b	<b>52</b> <b>34</b> 18
	Answer me //	5  1	1  1  0
	for I am afflicted and needy /	<u> 14  1</u>	<u>  4  0  4</u>
		85:13–86:1	<b>23</b> 13 10
86:2	Preserve my life / for I am a pious man // <sup>a</sup>	<u> 18  2</u>	<u>  5  5  0</u>
		85:12–86:2a	<b>34</b> 21 13
	Save your servant / O you, my God //	13  2	4  4  0
	the one who trusts <sup>b</sup> in you //	<u> 11  1</u>	<u>  2  0  2</u>
		85:13–86:2	<b>34</b> 22 12
86:3	Be gracious to me, O Lord //	11  1	2  2  0
	for unto you I cry / all day long //	<u> 14  2</u>	<u>  5  0  5</u>
		86:1–3	28 <b>17</b> 11

#### B. *Make Glad Your Servant for You are Good and Ready to Forgive* (86:4–5) [3.4]

86:4	Make glad <sup>a</sup> the soul of your servant //	9  1	3  3  0
	for to you, O Lord / I lift up my soul //	<u> 18  2</u>	<u>  5  0  5</u>
		86:2–4	<b>26</b> 14 12
86:5	For you, O Lord / are good and ready to forgive //	16  2	5  5  0
	and abundant in covenant-love / to all who call upon you //	<u> 12  2</u>	<u>  4  0  4</u>
		86:4–5	<b>17</b> 8 9

#### C. *Hear My Prayer in the Day of My Distress* (86:6–7) [4.4]

86:6	Give ear, O Lord / to my prayer //	16  2	3  3  0
	and give heed /	<u>  6  1</u>	<u>  1  0  1</u>
		86:2–6b	39 22 <b>17</b>
	To (or in) the voice of my supplication //	<u> 11  1</u>	<u>  2  0  2</u>
		86:4–6	<b>23</b> 11 12

86:7	In the day of my distress / I call upon you /	14	2	3	3	0
	for / <sup>a</sup> you will answer me //	<u>8</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>0</u>
		86:3-7		35	18	17

**D. *There Is None Like You—All the Nations Will Glorify Your Name* (86:8–9) [4.5]**

86:8	There is none like you among the gods / O Lord /	19	2	4	4	0
	and neither / <sup>a</sup> are their works like yours //	<u>9</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>0</u>
		86:6-8		17	14	3

86:9	All the nations / that you have made / they shall come /	<u>19</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>0</u>
		86:3-9a		46	29	17

	And they shall worship before you, O Lord //	17	1	3	3	0
	and they shall glorify your name //	<u>9</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>2</u>
		86:3-9		51	32	19

**E. *You Alone Are God!* (86:10) [2.2]**

86:10	For <span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 0 2px;">great</span> you are /	<u>9</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>0</u>
		86:8-10a		19	17	2

	And you do wondrous deeds //	<u>10</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>0</u>
		86:7-10b		26	24	2

	You are God / <sup>a</sup> only you //	<u>12</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>3</u>
		86:5-10		44	32	12

**F. *Teach Me Your Way and I Will Glorify Your Name* (86:11–12) [5.4]**

86:11	Teach me, O Lord / your way / and I will walk in your truth //	22	3	5	5	0
	give me an undivided heart /	<u>8</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>2</u>
		86:6-11b		42	32	10

	So as to fear your name //	<u>7</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>4</u>
		86:10-11		17	10	7

86:12	I will give thanks to you / O Lord / with all my heart //	20	3	5	5	0
	and I will glorify your name forever //	<u>13</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>3</u>
		86:11-12		17	10	7

**G. *Your Covenant-Love Is Great but Violent Men Seek My Life* (86:13–14b) [4.4]**

86:13	For your covenant-love / is great toward me //	13	2	4	4	0
	and you have delivered my soul / from the depths of Sheol //	<u>17</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>4</u>
		86:5-13		69	41	19

86:14 O God, arrogant men /<sup>a</sup> have risen up against me // 13 2 4 4 0  
 and a band of violent men / seek my life // 15 2 4 4 0  
 86:12-14a 24 17 7

H. **They Have No Regard for You but You are a God of Mercy** (86:14c-15) [4.3]

And they have no regard /<sup>b</sup> for you // 12 2 3 0 3  
 86:12-14 27 17 10

86:15 But you, O Lord / are a God of mercy and grace // 18 2 5 5 0  
 86:13-15a 24 17 7

Slow to anger / and abundant in covenant-love /<sup>a</sup> and truth // 12 3 5 0 5  
 86:13-15 29 17 12

I. **Be Gracious to Me and Save the “Son of Your Handmaid”** (86:16) [6.7]

86:16 Turn /<sup>a</sup> to me / and be gracious to me // 13 2 3 3 0  
 grant your strength /<sup>b</sup> to your servant // 9 2 3 3 0  
 and save / the son of your handmaid // 14 2 3 0 3  
 86:13-16 38 23 15

86:17 Show me a sign / of (your) goodness // 13 2 4 4 0  
 23 15 8

And those who hate me will see it /<sup>a</sup> and they will be ashamed // 15 2 3 3 0  
 for you /<sup>b</sup> O YHWH / have helped me and comforted me // 21 3 5 0 5  
 86:7-17 96 64 32  
 86:1-17 147 92 55

Scansion in SAS Units: (7.6) . (3.4).(4.4) . (5.4).(2.2).(4.5) . (4.4).(4.3) . (6.7)  
 (7+6) + (7+8) + (9+4+9) + (8+7) + (6+7) = 28 + 22 + 28 = 78  
 or: 50 // 50 [with pivot counted in each half]  
 {78 = 26 x 3}

Concentric Compositional Formula: 147 = 73 + 1 + 73 [word-count—with heading]  
 or: 74 // 74 [with pivot included in each half]

**Notes:**

86:2 Reading the disjunctive *‘ôlê wəyôred* here with Letteris and Ginsburg. BHS has *mērəkā*.

86:2<sup>b</sup> Reading *mērəkā* here in BHS as disjunctive.

86:4<sup>a</sup> Reading the *dehî* here in BHS as conjunctive.

86:7<sup>a</sup> Reading the *munaḥ* here in BHS as disjunctive.

86:8<sup>a</sup> Reading the *munaḥ* here in BHS as disjunctive.

86:10<sup>a</sup> Reading the *munaḥ* here in BHS as disjunctive.

- 86:14<sup>a</sup> Reading *šinnôrîṭ* followed by *ga'yā* (= *meteg*) in BHS as disjunctive.  
 86:14<sup>b</sup> Reading the sequence of *tarḥā* followed by *munaḥ* before *soph pasuq* in BHS as disjunctive.  
 86:15<sup>a</sup> Reading *mērākā* here in BHS as disjunctive.  
 86:16<sup>a</sup> Reading *mērākā* here in BHS as disjunctive.  
 86:16<sup>b</sup> Reading *mērākā* preceded by *ga'yā* (= *meteg*) in BHS as disjunctive.  
 86:17<sup>a</sup> Reading the sequence of two successive occurrences of *munaḥ* with *ga'yā* (= *meteg*) in Letteris and Ginsburg as disjunctive. BHS omits the *ga'yā* (= *meteg*).  
 86:17<sup>b</sup> Reading *mērākā* preceded by *ga'yā* (= *meteg*) in BHS as disjunctive.

## Summary of the Logoprosodic Analysis

1. Psalm 86 has nine strophes: 86:1–3, 4–5, 6–7, 8–9, 10, 11–12, 13–14b, 14c–15 and 16–17.

A	86:1–2a	balanced triad:	[(9 + 10) + (5 + 14) + 18]	= 19 + 19 + 18	morae
	86:2c–3	2 balanced dyads:	[13 + 11] + [11 + 14]	= 24 + 25	morae
B	86:4–5	2 balanced dyads:	[9 + 18] + [16 + 12]	= 27 + 28	morae
C	86:6–7	2 balanced dyads + pivot:	[16 + 6] + 11 + [14 + 8]	= 22 + 11 + 22	morae
D	86:8–9	2 balanced dyads + pivot:	[19 + 9] + 19 + [17 + 9]	= 28 + 19 + 26	morae

X	86:10	balanced (?) triad:	[9 + 10 + 12]	= 9 + 10 + 12	morae
		{may also be scanned:	[9 + 10 + 12] + [22 + 8]	= 31 + 30	morae
		with 86:11ab functioning as a pivot between strophes 5 & 6 and belonging to both}			

D'	86:11–12	2 balanced dyads + pivot:	[22 + 8] + 7 + [20 + 13]	= 30 + 7 + 33	morae
C'	86:13–14b	2 balanced dyads:	[13 + 17] + [13 + 15]	= 30 + 28	morae
B'	86:14c–15	balanced dyad + pivot:	[12 + 18 + 12]	= 12 + 18 + 12	morae
A'	86:16	balanced dyad + pivot:	[13 + 9 + 14]	= 13 + 9 + 14	morae
	86:17	balanced dyad + pivot:	[(13 + 8) + 7 + 21]	= 21 + 7 + 21	morae

2. The first strophe (86:1–3) has two parts arranged in six subdivisions on the basis of word-count: 86:1a, 1b, 1cd and 2a.
- 85:13–86:1 **23** words
  - 85:12–86:2a **34** (= **17** x 2) words
  - 85:13–86:2 **34** (= **17** x 2) words
  - 86:1–3 **17** words before *atnach*
3. The second strophe (86:4–5) is a single part arranged in two subdivisions on the basis of word-count: 86:4 and 5.
- 86:2–4 **26** words
  - 86:4–5 **17** words
4. The third strophe (86:6–7) is a single part arranged in three subdivisions on the basis of word-count: 86:6ab, 6c and 7.
- 86:4–6 **23** words

- 86:3–6        **17** words after *atnach*
  - 86:3–7        **17** words after *atnach*
  - 86:1–7        **23** words after *atnach*
5. The fourth strophe (86:8–9) is a single part arranged in three subdivisions on the basis of word-count: 86:8, 9a and 9bc.
- 86:6–8        **17** words
  - 86:5–8        **26** words
  - 86:3–8        **17** words after *atnach*
  - 86:1–8        **23** words after *atnach*
  - 86:3–9        **51** (= **17** x 3) words and **32** (= 2x2x2x2x2) words after *atnach*
6. The fifth strophe (86:10) is a single part arranged in three subdivisions on the basis of word-count: 86:10a, 10b and 10c.
- 86:5–10       **32** (= 2x2x2x2x2) words before *atnach*
  - 86:4–10       **52** (= **26** x 2) words and **17** words after *atnach*
7. The sixth strophe (86:11–12) is a single part arranged in three subdivisions on the basis of word-count: 86:11ab, 11c and 12.
- 86:10–11      **17** words
  - 86:6–11       **32** (= 2x2x2x2x2) words before *atnach*
  - 86:1–11       **32** (= 2x2x2x2x2) words after *atnach*
  - 86:11–12      **17** words
  - 86:9–12       **23** words before *atnach*
8. The seventh strophe (86:13–14b) is a single part arranged in two subdivisions on the basis of word-count: 86:13 and 14.
- 86:5–13       **69** (= **23** x 3) words
  - 86:3–13       **51** (= **17** x 3) words before *atnach*
9. The eighth strophe (86:14c–15) is a single part arranged in three subdivisions on the basis of word-count: 86:14c, 15a and 15b.
- 86:12–14      **17** words before *atnach*
  - 86:10–14      **17** words after *atnach*
  - 86:5–14       **26** words after *atnach*
  - 86:13–15      **17** words before *atnach*
10. The ninth strophe (86:16–17) is a single part arranged in three subdivisions on the basis of word-count: 86:16, 17a and 17bc.
- 86:13–16      **23** words before *atnach*
  - 86:5–16       **34** (= **17** x 2) words after *atnach*
  - 86:14–17      **26** words before *atnach*
  - 86:12–17      **23** words after *atnach*
  - 86:1–17       **92** (= **23** x 4) words before and **55** words after *atnach*

## Observations

1. The nine strophes in Psalm 86 may be outlined in a menorah pattern, which is determined primarily on prosodic grounds in terms of the inverse concentric arrangement in the distribution of SAS units.

### **Menorah Pattern: Individual Lament of the King of Israel (Ps 86:1–17)**

A	Hear my prayer for I am afflicted and needy—and save me	[7.7]	86:1–3
B	Make glad your servant for you are good and ready to forgive	[7.8]	86:4–7
C	There is none like you; all the nations will glorify your name	[6.4]	86:8–9
X	<b>You alone are God</b>	[2.2]	86:10
C'	Teach me your way and I will glorify your name forever	[4.6]	86:11–12
B'	Your covenant-love is great but evil men have risen against me	[8.7]	86:13–15
A'	Be gracious to me and save the “son of your handmaid”	[7.7]	86:16–17

2. In terms of the 147 words in Psalm 86, the **arithmological center** falls on the word גדול (“great”) in 86:10a, with 73 words on either side. The initial *Concentric Compositional Formula* is:

$$147 = 73 + 1 + 73 \quad \text{[word count—with heading]}$$

or: 74 // 74

A candidate for the **meaningful center** is found by including one word on either side of the **arithmological center** as follows:

אתה גדול כי For you are great.

In this instance the *Concentric Compositional Formula* becomes:

$$147 = 72 + 3 + 72 \quad \text{[word count—with heading]}$$

or: 75 // 75

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

ויכבדו לשמך And they will glorify your name  
אתה ועשה נפלאות כי גדול For you are great and you do wondrous works;

In this instance the *Concentric Compositional Formula* becomes:

$$147 = 70 + 7 + 70 \quad \text{[word count—with heading]}$$

or: 77 // 77 [word count with pivot in each half]

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

וישתחוּ לפניך אדני	They will worship before you, O Lord;
ויכבדו לשמך	And they will glorify your name.
כי גדול אתה ועשה נפלאות	For you are great and you do wondrous works;
אתה אלהים לבדך	You are God, you alone.

In this instance the *Concentric Compositional Formula* becomes:

147 = 67 + 13 + 67	[word count—with heading]
or: 80 // 80	[word count with pivot in each half]

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

כל גוים אשר עשית	All the nations which you have made—
יבואו וישתחוּ לפניך אדני	They will come and they will worship before you, O Lord;
ויכבדו לשמך	And they will glorify your name.
כי גדול אתה ועשה נפלאות	For you are great and you do wondrous works;
אתה אלהים לבדך	You are God, you alone.
הורני יהוה דרכך	Teach me, O Lord, your way;
אהלך באמתך	I will walk in your truth.

In this instance the *Concentric Compositional Formula* becomes:

147 = 62 + <b>23</b> + 62	[word count—with heading]
or: <b>85 // 85</b>	[word count with pivot in each half]

Note how carefully the prosodic structure at the end of Psalm 86 mirrors that of the beginning of this psalm, so long as the 2-word heading is included. The pertinent data for vv. 1–3 as over against vv. 15–17 is summarized in the table in Observation 3 below.

### 3. Summary of the concentric compositional formulae:

147 = 70 + 7 + 70	or: 77 // 77	
147 = 67 + 13 + 67	or: 80 // 80	
147 = 62 + <b>23</b> + 62	or: <b>85 // 85</b>	{85 = 17 x 5}
{plus others in between}		
147 = 31 + <b>85</b> + 31	or: 140 // 140	vv. 1–3a // 15–17
147 = 21 + 105 + 21	or: 126 // 126	vv. 1–2 // 16–17
147 = 12 + 123 + 12	or: 135 // 135	vv. 1–2a // 17
<b>78</b> = 28 + 22 + 28	or: 50 // 50	syntactic accentual-stress units
{78 = 26 x 3}		

46 = 17 + 12 + 17 or: 29 // 29 **briques** (primary accentual-stress units)  
 {46 = 23 x 2}

4. In the prosodic structure of Psalm 86, the basic building blocks in each poetic verset are the **briques** (primary 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*.
- **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 86 has 46 **briques**, 36 of which are marked by: *soph pasuq* (17 times, at the end of each verse), *atnach* (15 times, in each verse, except vv. 7 and 8), and *ole weyored* (4 times, in vv. 1, 2, 16 and 17). The remaining ten boundaries are marked by *reḥîa*<sup>c</sup> (7 times, in vv. 7, 8, 9, 11, 14, 16 and 17) and *reḥîa*<sup>c</sup> *muḡraš* (2 times, in vv. 15, 17), and *sinnôr* (v. 2).

5. The details in the prosodic structure of Psalm 86 may be displayed as follows [^ represents *atnach*; : represents *soph pasuq*; † represents *ole weyored*, and † represents all other accent markers]:

I	A	1	<i>təpīllāh ləḏāwīd</i> †	<i>haṭṭēh yhw̄h ʾoznəkā ʿānēnī</i> ^
			<i>kī ʿānī wəʿebyōn ʾānī</i> :	
		2	<i>šāmārāh nap̄šī</i> †	<i>kī ḥāsīd ʾānī</i> †
			<i>hōšā</i> <sup>c</sup> <i>ʿabḏəkā ʾattāh ʾelōhay</i> ^	<i>habbōṭēah ʾelēkā</i> :
		3	<i>ḥonnēnī ʾāḏōnāy</i> ^	<i>kī ʾelēkā ʾeqrāʾ kol hayyôm</i> :
	B	4	<i>šammēah neḡeš ʿabḏəkā</i> ^	<i>kī ʾelēkā ʾāḏōnay nap̄šī ʾeššāʾ</i> :
		5	<i>ʾkī ʾattāh ʾāḏōnāy ṭōḇ wəsallāh</i> ^	<i>wərah ḥesed ləḵol qōrəʾēkā</i> :
	C	6	<i>haʾāzīnāh yhw̄h təpīllātī</i> ^	<i>wəhaqšīḇāh bəqōl taḥānūnōṭāy</i> :
		7	<i>bəyôm šārātī ʾeqrāʾekā</i> †	<i>kī taʿānēnī</i> :

<p>II D <sup>8</sup> <i>ʔēn kāmôkâ bāʔēlôhîm ʔădônāy</i> †  <sup>9</sup> <i>kol gôyîm ʔăšer ʕāsîṭā</i> †  <i>wîkabbəḏû lišmekâ :</i></p>	<p><i>wəʔēn kəmaʕššêkâ :</i>  <i>yābôʔû wəyišṭahăwû ləpānêkâ ʔădônāy</i> ^</p>
<p>X <sup>10</sup> <i>kî</i> <span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 0 2px;">gādôl</span> <i>ʔattāh wəʕôsēh niplāʔôṭ</i> ^</p>	<p><i>ʔattāh ʔēlôhîm ləbaddekâ :</i></p>
<p>D <sup>11</sup> <i>hôrēnî yhw̄h darkekâ</i> †  <i>yaḥēd ləbābî ləyirʔāh šəmekâ :</i>  <sup>12</sup> <i>ôḏəkâ ʔădônāy ʔēlôhay bəkol ləbābî</i> ^</p>	<p><i>ʔăhallêk baʔămittekâ</i> ^  <i>waʔăkabbəḏāh imkâ ləʕôlām :</i></p>
<p>III C <sup>13</sup> <i>kî ḥasdəkâ gādôl ʕālāy</i> ^  <sup>14</sup> <i>ʔēlôhîm zēḏîm qāmû ʕālay</i> †</p>	<p><i>wəhišsaltā napšî miššəʔôl taḥṭiyāh :</i>  <i>waʕadat ʕarîšîm biqšû napšî</i> ^</p>
<p>B <i>wəlôʔ sāmûkâ ləneḡdām :</i>  <i>ʔerek ʔappayim</i> †</p>	<p><sup>15</sup> <i>wəʔattāh ʔădônāy ʔēl raḥûm wəḥannûn</i> ^  <i>wərab ḥesed weʔemet :</i></p>
<p>A <sup>16</sup> <i>pənēh ʔēlay</i> †  <i>tənāh ʕuzzəkâ ləʕabdekâ</i> ^</p>	<p><i>wəḥonnēnî</i> †  <i>wəhōšîʕāh ləben ʔāmātekâ :</i></p>
<p><sup>17</sup> <i>ʕšēh ʕimmî ʔôṭ</i> †  <i>wəyirʔû sônəʔay wəyēbōšû</i> ^  <i>ʕəzartanî wəniḥamtānî :</i></p>	<p><i>ləṭôḥāh</i> †  <i>kî ʔattāh yhw̄h</i> †</p>

6. The 40 **briques** (primary SAS units) are distributed in five strophes in Psalm 86 as follows: **46** = (9 + 8) + (5 + 2 + 5) + (8 + 9) = **17** + 12 + **17**. The **concentric compositional formula** (on the basis of primary stress units) is 28 // 28, with the central pivot included in each half.

The **arithmological center** of Psalm 86 falls on the word gādôl (“great”) in 86:10a, with a 73 words on either side. Psalm 86 has 78 SAS units, 46 **briques**, 19 versets, 9 strophes and 3 cantos. The **arithmological center** is in the middle canto, the middle strophe, the middle verset, the middle two **briques** and the middle four SAS units.

7. Terrien [*The Psalms* (2003), pp. 610–619] recognizes the concentric structure of Psalm 86 and argues for four pairs of parallel strophes framing the “core verse” in 86:11. The structure presented here is similar to that of Terrien. Van der Lugt and Labuschagne find 7 strophes arranged in 3 cantos. Fokkelman also has 7 strophes with a difference in the boundary between the 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> strophes. Logoprosodic analysis, however, indicates that there are 9 strophes divided into 3 cantos (vv. 1–7, 8–12, and 13–17). The differences between these three analyses may be outlined as follows (see also Observation 1 above):

<b>Terrien</b> (9 strophes)	<b>Van der Lugt</b> (7)	<b>Christensen</b> (9)
A 86:1–4 “your servant” (v. 2a)	I 1 86:1–2	I A 86:1–3
B 86:5–6 “abundant in covenant-love” (v. 5b)	2 86:3–5	B 86:4–5
C 86:7 “the day of my distress” (v. 7a)	3 86:6–7	C 86:6–7
D 86:8–10 “glorify your name” (v. 9b)	II 4 86:8–10	II D 86:8–9
X 86:11 “give me an undivided heart” (v. 11b)		X 86:10
D’ 86:12–13 “glorify your name” (v. 12b)	5 86:11–13	D’ 86:11–12
C’ 86:14 “band of violent men” (v. 14b)	6 86:14	III C’ 86:13–14b
B’ 86:15 “abundant in covenant-love” (v. 15b)	III 7 86:15–17	B’ 86:14c–15
A’ 86:16–17 “your servant” (v. 16b)		A’ 86:16–17

The primary differences in strophic boundaries in these three independent analyses appear in vv. 3–4, 12–13 and 14. In the first two instances it is easy to see how the principle of enjambment is missed by Terrien. In such circumstances, it is simply not possible to determine the proper strophic divisions in the Psalms on the basis of verbal signals alone, without paying careful attention to the musical structure as revealed by detailed study of the *te’amim*—in relation to balance in terms of mora-count and observable patterns in the distribution of SAS units throughout the poem as a whole.

The center of Psalm 86 is found in v. 10, however, rather than in v. 11 as Terrien argues on the basis of verbal symmetry alone. The true center is an affirmation of God’s greatness and the fact that he alone is God (cf. Deut 6:4). As Terrien notes [*Psalms*, p. 612], “Most commentators divide the poem into three parts, I. Cry for Help (vv. 1b–10); II. Prayer for learning the Lord’s Way (vv. 11–13); III. Deliverance and Promise to Praise (vv. 14–17.” These division correspond, at least in principle, to our division of the text into three cantos on prosodic grounds: I. (vv. 1–7); II. (vv. 8–12); III. vv. 13–17).

Van der Lugt does not recognize the concentric structure of Psalm 86 and more or less follows the practice of most commentators before him in his division of the psalm into three cantos: vv. 1–7; 8–14; and 15–17. The only difference is the location of the boundary between the second and third cantos.

The differences in regards boundary divisions on both levels (strophes and cantos) illustrate the problem extremely well. It is simply not possible to determine the prosodic boundaries in Hebrew poetry with any certainty on the basis of verbal markers alone. The “true” prosodic boundaries represent the musical structure of the text, which is part and parcel of the psalm from the point of its numerical composition as we now have it. The *te’amim* are not imposed on the text at some later point in time, as commonly assumed. The individual marks themselves may be introduced in the written manuscripts later, much the same as the vowels in individual words, but the “musical” system itself is integral to the text, which was apparently composed in its canonical form (i.e., as a numerical composition) for performance within the period of the Second Temple in Jerusalem.

A second problem stems from the fact that Terrien assumes a regular sequence of repeated bicola and tricola in a linear fashion, in spite of the concentric pattern he has discerned on the basis of repeated words and expressions (see above outline). Terrien divides Psalm 86 into two major parts, each of which “is made up of four substrophes of irregular length, but identifiable by the repeated words and expressions” (p. 613). He concludes that the psalmist in question “may not be a skillful poet” ... The rhythm is certainly irregular, but the composition suffers from highly emotional disturbance.” In short, Terrien shows little or no

awareness of the musical structure of Psalm 86, because he has chosen to ignore the “musical score” preserved in the *te’amim*. His methodology is a bit like trying to analyze the structure of the libretto of an opera with no knowledge of the music to which that libretto was written—a risky venture at best.

8. The evidence from the logoprosodic analysis supports the inclusion of the two-word heading as an integral part of Psalm 86 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 of Psalm 86:

86:1–3	<b>17</b>	words before <i>atnach</i>
86:1–6	<b>51</b>	(= <b>17</b> x 3) words
86:1–7	<b>23</b>	words after <i>atnach</i>
86:1–8	<b>23</b>	words after <i>atnach</i>
86:1–10	<b>52</b>	(= <b>26</b> x 2) words before <i>atnach</i>
86:1–11	<b>32</b>	words after <i>atnach</i>
86:1–16	<b>85</b>	(= <b>17</b> x 5) words before <i>atnach</i>
86:1–17	<b>92</b>	(= <b>23</b> x 4) words before and <b>55</b> [= <b>23</b> + <b>32</b> ] words after <i>atnach</i>

It is not possible to utilize one of the four compositional numbers (**17**, **23**, **26** and **32**) until the end of v. 3, which leaves fifteen possible boundaries to work with. In 8 out of 15 of these boundaries (or more than 53% of the time) a multiple of one of these four compositional numbers is present. This evidence suggests the possibility of deliberate design at the point of the numerical composition of Psalm 86 including the 2-word heading; for all of these numbers disappear if these two words are not considered as integral to the psalm at the point of its numerical composition.

9. Determining the details of the musical and literary structures of Psalm 86 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.

## 10. Bibliography

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