

Psalm 88:1–19

Translation, Logoprosodic Analysis, and Observations

Lament on a Lonely Death—a Prayer of Distress

Psalm 88:1–19

A. *Heading: A Maskil Belonging to the Sons of Korah* (88:1) [3.3]

88:1 A Song (which is) a psalm / belonging to the sons of Korah // 11 2 2 4 0
to the music director /^a 5 1 1 1 0
87:5–88:1b 27 17 10

According to *Mahalath Leannoth* // 9 1 3 3 0
87:3–88:1c 48 32 16

A *Maskil* / belonging to Heman the Ezrahite // 15 2 3 0 3
87:3–88:1 51 32 19

B. *I Cry Out Continually for Help—Hear Me in My Distress* (88:2–3) [4.4]

88:2 O **YHWH** / God of my salvation // 16 2 3 3 0
daily I cry out (for help) /^a nightly (I am) before you // 14 2 4 0 4
87:7–88:2 23 13 10

88:3 Let my prayer / come before you // 16 2 3 3 0
incline your ear / to my cry (of distress) // 14 2 3 0 3
87:6–88:3 37 20 17

C. *I Am Near Death—“With Those Going Down to the Pit”* (88:4–5) [4.4]

88:4 For my soul / is sated with troubles // 15 2 4 4 0
and my life / is brought near to Sheol // 11 2 3 0 3
87:5–88:4 53 30 23

88:5 I am reckoned / with those going down to the Pit // 12 2 4 4 0
I have become / like a virile man without strength // 14 2 4 0 4
88:1–5 39 22 17

D. *I am Like Those Who Lie in the Grave* (88:6) [4.4]

88:6 Among the dead / I am “set free” [i.e., relieved of duties] // 8 2 2 2 0
like those who are slain / who lie in the grave / 15 2 4 4 0
88:2–6 34 20 14

Whom you do not remember /^a any more // 10 2 4 4 0
and they / from your hand are cut off // 15 2 3 0 3
88:3–6 34 21 13

E. *You Have Put Me at the Bottom of the Pit* (88:7–8) [4.4]

88:7	You have put me / at the bottom of the Pit //	<u> 12 2_</u>	<u> 3 3 0</u>
		88:5–7a	24 17 7
	In the utter darkness / in the depths //	<u> 11 2_</u>	<u> 2 0 2</u>
		88:5–7	26 17 9
88:8	Upon me / your wrath rests //	13 2	3 3 0
			60 38 22
	And with all your waves / you have afflicted (me), selah //	<u> 15 2_</u>	<u> 4 0 4</u>
		88:2–8	53 30 23

F. *I am Trapped—You Have Made Me Repulsive to My Friends* (88:9–10a) [4.4]

88:9	You have removed my close friends far / from me //	13 2	3 3 0
	you have made me repulsive / ^a to them //	<u> 14 2_</u>	<u> 3 3 0</u>
		88:5–9a	39 26 13
	I am closed in / and I cannot get out //	<u> 11 2_</u>	<u> 3 0 3</u>
		88:6–9	34 22 12
88:10	My eye has wasted away / because of my affliction //	<u> 16 2_</u>	<u> 4 4 0</u>
		88:6–10a	38 26 12

G. *I Call Out to You—Can the Dead Rise Up and Praise You?* (88:10b–11) [4.4]

	I have called upon you, O YHWH / every day //	<u> 14 2_</u>	<u> 4 4 0</u>
		88:9–10b	17 14 3
	I have spread out to you / ^a my palms //	<u> 12 2_</u>	<u> 3 0 3</u>
		88:7–10	32 20 12
88:11	Will you for the dead / ^a perform wonders? //	<u> 11 1_</u>	<u> 3 3 0</u>
		88:9–11a	23 17 6
	Can this be the case in regards the Rephaim? /	<u> 6 1_</u>	<u> 2 0 2</u>
		88:8–11b	32 20 12
	Will they rise up / and will they praise you, selah ? //	<u> 13 2_</u>	<u> 3 0 3</u>
		88:7–11	40 23 17

H. *Will Your Covenant-Love be Made Known in the Grave?* (88:12–13) [4.4]

88:12	Will your covenant-love / be declared in the grave? //	<u> 10 2_</u>	<u> 3 3 0</u>
		88:8–12a	38 23 15
	Your faithfulness / in Abaddon? //	<u> 11 2_</u>	<u> 2 0 2</u>

	88:8–12		40 23 17
88:13	Will your wonders / ^a be made known in darkness //	<u> 12 2 </u>	<u> 3 3 0 </u>
	88:8–13a		43 26 17
	And your righteousness / in the land of forgetfulness //	<u> 14 2 </u>	<u> 3 0 3 </u>
	88:10–13		30 17 13
I. I Cry Out to You Continually—Why Do You Reject Me? (88:14–15)			[4.4]
88:14	And as for me / unto you, O YHWH / ^a I cry out for help //	<u> 17 2 </u>	<u> 4 4 0 </u>
			23 13 10
	And in the morning / my prayer comes before you //	<u> 17 2 </u>	<u> 3 0 3 </u>
	88:11–14		26 13 13
88:15	Why, O YHWH / do you reject my soul? //	<u> 13 2 </u>	<u> 4 4 0 </u>
	88:11–15a		30 17 13
	(Why) do you hide your face / ^a from me? //	<u> 12 2 </u>	<u> 3 0 3 </u>
	88:11–15		33 17 16
J. I am Near Death—“Your Terrors Have Destroyed Me” (88:16–17)			[4.4]
88:16	I have been afflicted (and) about to die / from my youth on //	<u> 17 2 </u>	<u> 4 4 0 </u>
	88:8–16		64 38 26
	I suffer your terrors / ^a I am overcome //	<u> 17 2 </u>	<u> 3 0 3 </u>
	88:6–16		85 51 34
88:17	Over me / has passed your wrath //	<u> 14 2 </u>	<u> 3 3 0 </u>
	88:15–17a		17 11 6
	Your terrors / have destroyed me //	<u> 14 2 </u>	<u> 2 0 2 </u>
	88:14–17		26 15 11
K. You Have Cut Me Off—“My Chief Companion is Darkness” (88:18–19)			[3.3]
88:18	They swirl around me like water / all the day //	12 2	4 4 0
	they encompass me altogether //	<u> 11 1 </u>	<u> 3 0 3 </u>
	88:15–18		26 15 11
88:19	You have removed far from me / lover and friend //	17 2	4 4 0
	my chief companion is darkness //	<u> 8 1 </u>	<u> 2 0 2 </u>
	88:11–19		58 32 26
	88:9–19		78 46 32
	88:1–19		142 84 58

Scansion in Accentual Stress Units:

(3.3).(4.4) . (4.4).(4.4) . (4.4).(4.4).(4.4) . (4.4).(4.4) . (4.4).(3.3)

$$(15 + 16) + (8 + 8 + 8) + (16 + 15) = 31 + 24 + 31 = 86$$

or: **55 // 55** [with pivot counted in each half]

$$\{55 = 23 + 32 \text{ and } 86 = (17 + 26) \times 2\}$$

Concentric Compositional Formula: 147 = 73 + 1 + 73 [word-count—with heading]

or: 74 // 74 [with pivot included in each half]

Notes:

88:1^a Reading the sequence of two successive occurrences of *munaḥ* preceded by *ga'yā* (= *meteg*) in Ginsburg as disjunctive. BHS omits the *ga'yā* (= *meteg*).

88:2^a Reading *rəbīa' mūgraš* preceded by *ga'yā* (= *meteg*) in Letteris as disjunctive.

88:6^a Reading the *munaḥ* preceded by *ga'yā* (= *meteg*) with *maqeph* in Letteris as disjunctive. BHS omits the *ga'yā* (= *meteg*).

88:9^a Reading the sequence of two successive occurrences of *munaḥ* with *ga'yā* (= *meteg*) in Ginsburg and Letteris as disjunctive. BHS omits the *ga'yā* (= *meteg*).

88:10^a Reading the sequence of *mērəkā* followed by *munaḥ* before *silluq* in BHS as disjunctive.

88:11^a Reading *mērəkā* followed by *ga'yā* (= *meteg*) in Ginsburg and Letteris as disjunctive. BHS omits the *ga'yā* (= *meteg*). Some Hebrew Mss have *deḥî* here.

88:13^a Reading the sequence of two successive occurrences of *munaḥ* here in BHS as disjunctive.

88:14^a Reading the sequence of two successive occurrences of *munaḥ* here in BHS as disjunctive.

88:15^a Reading the sequence of *mērəkā* followed by *munaḥ* before *silluq* in BHS as disjunctive.

88:16^a Reading the sequence of *mērəkā* followed by *munaḥ* before *silluq* in BHS as disjunctive.

Summary of the Logoprosodic Analysis

1. Psalm 88 has 11 strophes: 88:1, 2–3, 4–5, 6, 7–8, 9–10a, 10b–11, 12–13, 14–15, 16–17 and 18–19.

A	88:1	balanced dyad + pivot:	$[(11 + 5) + 6 + 15]$	=	$16 + 6 + 15$	morae
B	88:2–3	2 balanced dyads:	$[16 + 14] + [16 + 14]$	=	$30 + 30$	morae
C	88:4–5	2 balanced dyads:	$[15 + 11] + [12 + 14]$	=	$26 + 26$	morae
D	88:6	2 balanced dyads:	$[8 + 15] + [10 + 15]$	=	$23 + 25$	morae
E	88:7	balanced dyad:	$[12 + 11]$	=	$12 + 11$	morae
	88:8	balanced dyad:	$[13 + 15]$	=	$13 + 15$	morae

X	88:9–10a	2 balanced dyads:	$[13 + 14] + [11 + 16]$	=	$27 + 27$	morae
---	----------	-------------------	-------------------------	---	-----------	-------

E'	88:10b–d	balanced dyad:	$[14 + 12]$	=	$14 + 12$	morae
	88:11	balanced dyad + pivot:	$[11 + 6 + 13]$	=	$11 + 6 + 13$	morae
D'	88:12	balanced dyad:	$[10 + 11]$	=	$10 + 11$	morae
	88:13	balanced dyad:	$[12 + 14]$	=	$12 + 14$	morae
C'	88:14–15	balanced dyad:	$[13 + 12]$	=	$13 + 12$	morae
B'	88:16–17	balanced dyad:	$[17 + 17]$	=	$17 + 17$	morae
A'	88:18–19	2 balanced dyads:	$[12 + 11] + [17 + 8]$	=	$23 + 25$	morae

2. The first strophe (88:1–3) is a single part arranged in three subdivisions on the basis of word-count: 88:1ab, 1c and 1d.
- 87:3–88:1 **51** (= **17** x 3) words
3. The second strophe (88:2–3) is a single part arranged in two subdivisions on the basis of word-count: 88:2 and 3.
- 87:7–88:2 **23** words
 - 87:6–88:3 **17** words after *atnach*
4. The third strophe (88:4–5) is a single part arranged in two subdivisions on the basis of word-count: 88:4 and 5.
- 87:5–88:4 **23** words after *atnach*
 - 88:1–5 **17** words after *atnach*
5. The fourth strophe (88:6) is a single part arranged in two subdivisions on the basis of word-count: 88:6ab and 6cd.
- 88:2–6 **17** words after *atnach*
 - 88:1–6 **52** (= **26** x 2) words and **32** (= $2 \times 2 \times 2 \times 2 \times 2$) words before *atnach*
6. The fifth strophe (88:7–8) has two parts arranged in four subdivisions on the basis of word-count: 88:7a, 7b, 8a and 8b.
- 88:5–7 **26** words and **17** words before *atnach*
 - 88:2–8 **23** words after *atnach*
 - 88:1–8 **64** (= **32** x 2 = $2 \times 2 \times 2 \times 2 \times 2 \times 2$) words and **26** words after *atnach*

7. The sixth strophe (88:9–10a) is a single part arranged in three subdivisions on the basis of word-count: 88:9ab, 9c and 10a.
- 88:6–9 **34** (= **17** x 2) words
 - 88:5–9 **26** words before *atnach*
 - 88:2–9 **26** words after *atnach*
 - 88:6–10a **26** words before *atnach*
8. The seventh strophe (88:10b–11) has two parts arranged in five subdivisions on the basis of word-count: 88:10b, 10c, 11a, 11b and 11c.
- 88:7–10 **32** (= $2 \times 2 \times 2 \times 2 \times 2$) words
 - 88:5–10 **34** (= **17** x 2) words before *atnach*
 - 88:1–10 **52** (= **26** x 2) words before and **32** (= $2 \times 2 \times 2 \times 2 \times 2$) words after *atnach*
 - 88:9–11 **17** words before *atnach*
 - 88:7–11 **40 = 23 + 17** [compositional formula]
9. The eighth strophe (88:12–13) has two parts arranged in four subdivisions on the basis of word-count: 88:12a, 12b, 13a and 13b.
- 88:8–12 **40 = 23 + 17** [compositional formula]
 - 88:7–12 **26** words after *atnach*
 - 88:5–12 **26** words after *atnach*
 - 88:3–12 **32** (= $2 \times 2 \times 2 \times 2 \times 2$) words after *atnach*
 - 88:10–13 **17** words before *atnach*
 - 88:9–13 **23** words before *atnach*
 - 88:4–13 **32** (= $2 \times 2 \times 2 \times 2 \times 2$) words after *atnach*
10. The ninth strophe (88:14–15) has two parts arranged in four subdivisions on the basis of word-count: 88:14a, 14b, 15a and 15b.
- 88:11–14 **26 = 13 + 13** [compositional formula]
 - 88:8–14 **23** words after *atnach*
 - 88:5–14 **32** (= $2 \times 2 \times 2 \times 2 \times 2$) words after *atnach*
 - 88:11–15 **17** words before *atnach*
 - 88:8–15 **34** (= **17** x 2) words before and **26** words before *atnach*
11. The tenth strophe (88:16–17) has two parts arranged in four subdivisions on the basis of word-count: 88:16a, 16b, 17a and 17b.
- 88:12–16 **32** (= $2 \times 2 \times 2 \times 2 \times 2$) words
 - 88:6–16 **85 = 51 + 34** [compositional formula]
 - 88:14–17 **26** words
 - 88:13–17 **32** (= $2 \times 2 \times 2 \times 2 \times 2$) words
 - 88:11–17 **32** (= $2 \times 2 \times 2 \times 2 \times 2$) words before *atnach*
12. The eleventh strophe (88:18–19) is a single part arranged in two subdivisions on the basis of word-count: 88:18 and 19.
- 88:15–18 **26** words

- 88:15–19 **32** (= 2x2x2x2x2) words
- 88:14–19 **23** words before *atnach*
- 88:13–19 **26** words before *atnach*
- 88:11–19 **58 = 32 + 26** [compositional formula]
- 88:9–18 **78 = 46 + 32** [compositional formula]

Observations

1. The 11 strophes of Psalm 88 may be outlined in a nested menorah pattern, which is determined primarily on prosodic grounds, as follows:

Menorah Pattern: Lament on Lonely Death—Prayer of Distress (Psalm 88:1–19)

A	Heading—a psalm belonging to the sons of Korah: a <i>maskil</i>	[3.3]	88:1
B	I cry out continually for help—hear me in my distress!	[4.4]	88:2–3
C	I am near death—“with those going down to the Pit”	[4.4]	88:4–5
X	I am cut off from everyong and near death		88:6–13
C’	I cry out to you continually; why do you reject me?	[4.4]	88:14–15
B’	I am near death—“your terrors have destroyed me”	[4.4]	88:16–17
A’	You have cut me off—“my chief companion is darkness”	[3.3]	88:18–19

Inner Core: I Am Cut Off from Everyone and Near Death (Psalm 88:1–19)

A	I am like those who lie in the grave	[4.4]	88:6
B	You have put me at the bottom of the Pit	[4.4]	88:7–8
X	You have made me repulsive to my friends—I am trapped	[4.4]	88:9–10a
B’	I call upon you continually—can the dead rise up and praise you?	[4.4]	88:10b–11
A’	Will your covenant-love be made known in the grave?	[4.4]	88:12–13

2. In terms of the 142 words in Psalm 88, the **arithmological center** falls between the words **כלא ולא** (“I am closed in and I cannot [get out]”) in 88:9b, with 71 words on either side. The initial *Concentric Compositional Formula* is:

$$142 = 71 + 0 + 71 \quad \text{[word count—with heading]}$$

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

הרחקת מודעי ממני	You have removed my acquaintances far from me;
שתני תועבות למו	You have made me an object of loathing to them.
אצא כלא ולא	I am shut up and cannot go out;
עיני דאבה מני עני	My eye has wasted away because of my affliction.
קראתיך	I have called out (for help) to you.

In this instance the *Concentric Compositional Formula* becomes:

$$142 = 64 + 14 + 64 \quad \text{[word count—with heading]}$$

$$\text{or: } 78 // 78 \quad \text{[with pivot counted in each half]}$$

$$\{78 = 26 \times 3 \text{ and } 64 = 32 \times 2 = 2 \times 2 \times 2 \times 2 \times 2\}$$

3. The 21-word “nested framework” (with the 18-word framework underlined) reads as follows:

- 1 שיר מזמור לבני קרח A song (which is) a psalm belonging to the sons of Korah
למנצח על־מחלת לענות For the music director according to Mahalath Leannoth
משכיל להימן האזרחי A maskil belonging to Heman the Ezrahite.
- 2 יהוה אלהי ישועתי O YHWH God of my salvation,
יום־צעתי בלילה נגדך Daily I cry out, nightly (I am) before you;
- 3 תבוא לפניך תפלתי Let my prayer come before you.
- נשאתי אמיך אפונה I suffer your terrors (and) I am overcome.
- 17 עלי עברו חרוניך Over me has passed your wrath:
בעותיך צמתותני Your terrors have destroyed me.
- 18 סבוני כמים כל היום They swirl around me like water all the day;
הקיפו עלי יחד They encompass me altogether.
- 19 הרחקת ממני אהב ורע You have removed far from me lover and friend;
מידעי מחשך My chief companion is darkness.

4. Summary of the concentric compositional formulae:

$$142 = 64 + 14 + 64 \quad \text{or: } 78 // 78$$

$$142 = 55 + 32 + 55 \quad \text{or: } 87 // 87$$

{with others in between}

$$142 = 21 + 100 + 21 \quad \text{or: } 121 // 121$$

$$142 = 18 + 106 + 18 \quad \text{or: } 124 // 124$$

$$86 = 31 + 24 + 31 \quad \text{or: } 55 // 55 \quad \text{syntactic accentual-stress units}$$

$$\{86 = 2 \times (17 + 26) \text{ and } 55 = 23 + 32\}$$

$$46 = 16 + 14 + 16 \quad \text{or: } 30 // 30 \quad \text{briques (primary accentual-stress units)}$$

$$\{46 = 23 \times 2\}$$

5. In the prosodic structure of Psalm 88, 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 88 has 46 **briques**, 42 of which are marked by: *soph pasuq* (19 times, at the end of each verse), *atnach* (19 times, in each verse), and *ole weyored* (4 times, in vv. 1, 6, 9 and 10). The remaining four boundaries are marked by *rəḥîa*^c (2 times, in vv. 1 and 6) and *rəḥîa*^c *muḡraš* (2 times, in vv. 8 and 11).

6. The details in the prosodic structure of Psalm 88 may be displayed as follows [^ represents *atnach*; : represents *soph pasuq*; † represents *ole weyored*, and † represents all other accent markers]:

I	A	¹ <i>šîr mizmôr</i> [†] <i>lamnašēah</i> ‘ <i>al māḥālaṭ lə‘annôṭ</i> ^	<i>ihne qōrah</i> † <i>maškîl ləhēmān hā‘ezrāḥî</i> :
	B	² <i>yhw h</i> ‘ <i>ēlōhē yəšū‘ātî</i> ^ ³ <i>tāḇô</i> ‘ <i>ləpānēkā təpillātî</i> ^	<i>yôm šā‘aqṭî ḥallaylāh neḡedkā</i> : <i>haṭṭēh</i> ‘ <i>oznəkā lərinnātî</i> :
II	C	⁴ <i>kî sāḇə‘āh ḥərā‘ôṭ napšî</i> ^ ⁵ <i>neḥšəḇṭî</i> ‘ <i>im yôrəḏē ḥôr</i> ^	<i>wəḥayyay liš‘ôl higgî‘û</i> : <i>hāyîṭî kəḡeber</i> ‘ <i>ēn</i> ‘ <i>ēyāl</i> :
	D	⁶ <i>bammēṭîm ḥopšî</i> † <i>‘āšer lô</i> ‘ <i>zəkartām</i> ‘ <i>ôḏ</i> ^	<i>kəṃô ḥālālîm šōkəḇē qeber</i> † <i>wəhēm māh miyyāḏəḳā niḡzārû</i> :
III	E	⁷ <i>šāttanî bəḇôr taḥṭîyôṭ</i> ^ ⁸ ‘ <i>alay sāməkāh ḥāmāṭekā</i> ^	<i>bəmaḥšəkkîm bimšōlôṭ</i> : <i>wəḳol mišbārəkā</i> † ‘ <i>innîṭā</i> selāh :

X	⁹ <i>hirḥaqtā məyuddā‘ay mimmennî</i> † <i>kālû</i> ‘ <i>wəlo</i> ‘ <i>‘ēšē</i> :	<i>šāttanî tō‘əḇôṭ lāmô</i> ^ ¹⁰ ‘ <i>ēnî dā‘əḇāh minnî</i> ‘ <i>ōnî</i> †
---	---	--

E'	<i>qərāʾtīkā yhw̄h bəkol yôm</i> ^ 11 <i>hā́lammētīm taʿāseh pele</i> ^	<i>šīṭṭaḥtī ʾēlēkā kappāy</i> : <i>ʾim rəpāʾīm</i> † <i>yāqûmû yôdûkâ selāh</i> :
IV D'	12 <i>hayəsuppar baqqeḇer ḥasdekā</i> ^ 13 <i>hāyiwwādaᶜ baḥōšek pilʾekā</i> ^	<i>ʾēmûnātəkā bāʾāḥaddôn</i> : <i>wəšidqātəkā bəʾereṣ nəšīyāh</i> :
C'	14 <i>waʾānī ʾēlēkā yhw̄h šiwwaʿtī</i> ^ 15 <i>lāmāh yhw̄h tiznaḥ napšī</i> ^	<i>ûḥabbōqer təpīllāṭī təqaddəmekā</i> : <i>tastīr pānēkā mimmennī</i> :
V B'	16 <i>ʿānī ʾānī wəḡōwēaᶜ minnōʿar</i> ^ 17 <i>ʿālay ʿābərû ḥārônēkā</i> ^	<i>nāsāʾtī ʾēmēkā ʾāpûnāh</i> : <i>bīiʿûṭēkā šimmətūtūnī</i> :
A'	18 <i>sabbûnī kāmāyim kol hayyôm</i> ^ 19 <i>hirḥaqtā mimmennī ʾōhēḇ wārēaᶜ</i> ^	<i>hiqqîpû ʿālay yāḥaḍ</i> : <i>məyuddāʿay maḥšāk</i> :

7. The 46 **briques** (primary SAS units) are distributed in eleven strophes in Psalm 88 as follows: **46** = (4 + 4) + (4 + 4) + (5 + 4 + 5) + (4 + 4) + (4 + 4) = 16+ 14 + 16. The **concentric compositional formula** (on the basis of primary stress units) is 30 // 30, with the central pivot (vv. 7–11) included in each half.

8. The **arithmological center** of Psalm 88 falls between the words *kālūʾ wəloʾ* (“I am closed in and cannot”) in 88:9c, with 71 words on either side. Psalm 88 has 85 SAS units, 46 **briques**, 21 versets, 11 strophes and 5 cantos. The **arithmological center** is in the middle canto, the middle strophe, the middle verset, the two middle **briques**, and at the very end of the middle two SAS units. In terms of mora-count, there are 282 morae before and 296 morae after the arithmological center.

The two occurrences of the word *selah* in vv. 8 and 11 both appear to be calling attention to noteworthy features in the numerical composition, as well as to significant boundaries in the prosodic structure of Psalm 88.

Note the following Compositional Formulae:

88:7–11 **40 = 23 + 17**

88:11–19 **58 = 32 + 26**

The second occurrence of the word *selah* (88:11) joins two of these carefully contrived units, which begin with the beginning of the middle canto (88:7–11) and concludes precisely at the end of Psalm 88.

Other Compositional Formulae of note include:

88:5–9a **39 = 26 + 13** [the YHWH-ʾechad Model]

88:6–16 **85 = 51 + 34** {all divisible by 17}

88:8–12 **40 = 23 + 17**

88:9–19 **78 = 46 + 32** {combining the numbers 26, 23 and 32}

9. Terrien finds five strophes in Psalm 83, which he subdivides into 10 sub-strophes (*The Psalms: Strophic Structure and Theological Commentary* [Eerdmans, 2003], pp. 624–30). Van der Lugt and Labuschagne find essentially the same 10 strophes, except for a different boundary between the last two; and Fokkelman has 7 strophes. All four omit the 11-word heading (v. 1). The analysis presented here, which is based on the balance in mora-count and the concentric pattern in the distribution of SAS units, indicates that there are 11 strophes arranged concentrically in five cantos (88:1–3, 4–6, 7–11, 12–15 and 16–19).

Christensen	Terrien	Van der Lugt/Labuschagne	Fokkelman
I A 88:1	Heading (v. 1)	Heading (v. 1)	Heading (v. 1)
B 88:2–3	I I 88:2–3	I.1 1 88:2–3	1 88:2–3
II C 88:4–5	2 88:4–5	2 88:4–5	2 88:4–5
D 88:6	3 88:6	3 88:6	3 88:6–7
III E 88:7–8	4 88:7–8	I.2 4 88:7–8	4 88:8–10
X 88:9–10a	II 5 88:9–10a	5 88:9–10a	
E' 88:10b–11	6 88:10b–11	II.1 6 88:10b–11	5 88:11–13
IV D' 88:12–13	III 7 88:12–13	7 88:12–13	
C' 88:14–15	8 88:14–15	8 88:14–15	6 88:14–16
V B' 88:16–17	9 88:16–17	II.2 9 88:16–18	7 88:17–19
A' 88:18–19	10 88:18–19	10 88:19	

10. Once again, the evidence from the logoprosodic analysis supports the inclusion of the eleven-word heading and the two occurrences of the word *selah* as an integral part of Psalm 88 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:

88:1–5	17 words after <i>atnach</i>
88:1–6	52 (= 26 x 2) words and 32 words before <i>atnach</i>
88:1–8	64 (= 32 x 2) words and 26 words after <i>atnach</i>
88:1–10	52 (= 26 x 2) words before and 32 words after <i>atnach</i>
88:1–11	92 (= 23 x 4) words
88:1–15	69 (= 23 x 3) words before <i>atnach</i>
88:1–16	51 (= 17 x 3) words after <i>atnach</i>
88:1–18	136 (= 17 x 8) words

It is not possible to utilize one of the four compositional numbers (**17**, **23**, **26** and **32**) until the end of verse 2, which leaves eighteen possible boundaries to work with. In 8 out of 18 of these boundaries (or more than 44% 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 88 including the 11-word heading and two instances of the word *selah* (vv. 8 and 11) for all of these numbers disappear if these two words are not considered to be an integral part of the psalm at the point of its numerical composition. In this instance the so-called thirteen “extra” words in Psalm 88 constitute more than 9% of the psalm as it now stands in BHS.

11. Determining the details of the musical and literary structures of Psalm 88 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.

12. Bibliography:

- Barth, C. *Die Errettung vom Tod in den individuellen Klage- und Dankliedern des Alten Testament* (Zollikon, 1947).
- Brueggemann, W. *The Message of the Psalms: A Theological Commentary* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1984) 78–81.
- Culley, R. C. "Psalm 88 among the Complaints." In *In Memoriam P. C. Craigie*. JSOTSup 67 (Sheffield, 1988) 289–301.
- Füglister, "Psalm lxxxviii der Rätsel Lösung." In *Congress Volume: Leuven 1989* (Leiden, 1991) 264–97.
- Goulder, M. D. *The Psalms of the Sons of Korah* (Sheffield, 1982) 200–204.
- Grelot, P. *HOFŠĪ* (Ps LXXXVIII:6)." *VT* 14 (1964) 256–63.
- Haag, E. "Psalm 88." In E. Haag and F.-L. Hossfeld (eds.), *Freude und der Weisung des Herrn: Beiträge zur Theologie der Psalmen*. FS H. Gross (Stuttgart: Katholisches Bibelwerk, 1986) 149–70
- Haddix, J. L. *Lamentation as Personal Experience in Selected Psalms*. Ph.D. diss., Boston University, 1980. Ann Arbor: UMI, 1980. 113–30.
- Lipiński, E. "Trois Hébraïsmes méconnus." *Rivista degli Studi Orientali* 44 (1969) 83–102.
- Martin-Achard, R. *De la mort à la resurrection: L'origine et développement d'une croyance dans le cadre de l'Ancien Testament* (Neuchâtel, 1956).
- McCann, A. J. Clinton, Jr. *A Theological Introduction to the Psalms* (Nashville, 1993) 98–100.
- Poulsen, N. [On Psalm 88], *König und Tempel in Glauben Zeugnis des Alten Testaments* (Stuttgart, 1967).
- Preuss, H. D. "Psalm 88 als Beispiel alttestamentlichen Redens vom Tod." In *Das Tod-ungelöstes Rätsel oder überwundener Feind?* (1974) 63–79.
- Seybold, K. *Das Gebet des Kranken im Alten Testament: Untersuchungen zur Bestimmung und Zuordnung der Krankheits- und Heilungspsalmen*. BWANT 19 (Stuttgart, 1973).
- Tate, M. E. "Psalm 88." *RevExp* 87 (1990) 91–95.
- von Rad, G. "Statements of Faith in the Old Testament about Life and Death." In *God at Work in Israel* (Nashville, 1964) 194–209.
- Wachter, L. [On Ps 88:6], *Der To dim Alten Testament* (Stuttgart, 1967).

© 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