

# Psalm 95:1–11

## Translation, Logoprosodic Analysis, and Observations

### Remembering Meribah and Massah

### Psalm 95:1–11

#### A. *Come, Let Us Sing to YHWH; Let Us Make a Joyful Noise To Him* (95:1–2) [3.3]

95:1 O come <sup>a</sup> let us sing joyfully to YHWH // 14 1 3 3 0  
let us make a joyful noise / to the Rock of our salvation // 14 2 3 0 3  
94:21–95:1 29 17 12

95:2 Let us come into his presence with songs of praise // 14 1 3 3 0  
with hymns / let us make a joyful noise to him // 12 2 3 0 3  
94:16–95:2 74 40 34

#### B. *YHWH Is a Great God—a Great King Above All Gods* (95:3) [2.2]

95:3 For a great God /<sup>a</sup> is YHWH // 12 2 4 4 0  
23 13 10  
[And]\* a great king / above all gods // 13 2 5 0 5  
94:22–95:3 37 20 17

#### C. *From Depths to Heights, Sea and Dry Land—He Made It All* (95:4–5) [4.4]

95:4 In whose hand / are the deep places of the earth / 12 2 4 4 0  
and the heights of the mountains /<sup>a</sup> are his // 12 2 3 0 3  
94:23–95:4 37 20 17

95:5 The sea is his / 7 1 4 4 0  
95:1–5a 32 18 14  
For he has made it // 9 1 2 2 0  
and the dry land / his hands formed // 14 2 3 0 3  
95:1–5 36 19 17

#### D. *Come Let Us Worship and Bow Down, for YHWH Is Our God* (95:6–7) [5.5]

95:6 Come / let us worship and bow down // 14 2 3 3 0  
let us kneel / before YHWH /<sup>a</sup> our maker // 18 3 4 0 4  
95:4–6 23 13 10

95:7 For he is our God / 11 1 3 3 0  
95:4–7a 26 16 10

And we are the people of his pasture / the sheep of his hand //	18 2	5 5 0	
O that today / you would listen to his voice //	14 2	4 0 4	
	94:22–95:7	<b>64</b> 36 28	

**E. God Says: “Harden Not Your Hearts as in Meribah and Massah” (95:8–9) [4.4]**

95:8 Harden not your hearts / as in Meribah //	_12 2_	4 4 0	
	95:6–8a	<b>23</b> 15 8	
As on the day of Massah / in the wilderness //	_10 2_	3 0 3	
	95:6–8	<b>26</b> 15 11	
95:9 Where your forefathers / tested me //	_13 2_	3 3 0	
	95:4–9a	45 28 <b>17</b>	
When they provoked me / though they had seen my work //	_15 2_	4 0 4	
	95:7–9	<b>26</b> 15 11	

**F. God Says: “I Punished Them Forty Years for Their Disobedience (95:10ab) [2.2]**

95:10 Forty years / I loathed that generation /	_16 2_	4 4 0	
		<b>46</b> 28 18	
And I said / “They are a people whose hearts go astray” //	_16 2_	5 5 0	
	95:8–10a	<b>23</b> 16 7	
	95:1–10a	<b>78 46 32</b>	

**G. God Swore: “Never Shall They Enter My Rest!” (95:10c–11) [3.3]**

And as for them / they do not regard / <sup>a</sup> my ways //	_15 3_	4 0 4	
	95:6–10	<b>46</b> 27 19	
95:11 Against whom I took an oath in my anger //	_11 1_	3 3 0	
	95:9–11a	<b>23</b> 15 8	
“Never shall they enter / my rest” //	_14 2_	4 0 4	
	95:8–11	<b>34</b> 19 15	
	95:1–11	<b>89</b> 47 42	

Scansion in Accentual Stress Units: (3.3).(2.2).(4.4) . (5.5) . (4.4).(2.2).(3.3)  
(6 + 4 + 8) + 10 + (8 + 4 + 6) = 18 + 10 + 18 = **46**  
or: 28 // 28 {**46 = 23 x 2**}

Concentric Compositional Formula: 89 = 44 + 1 + 44 [word count]  
or: 45 // 45 [word count with “pivot” in each half]

## Notes:

- 95:1<sup>a</sup> Reading *dehi* in BHS as conjunctive.  
 95:3<sup>a</sup> Reading the sequence of two occurrences of *munaḥ* in BHS as disjunctive.  
 95:4<sup>a</sup> Reading the sequence of *merka* followed by *munaḥ* in BHS as disjunctive.  
 95:6<sup>a</sup> Reading *merka* preceded by *ga'ya* (= *meteg*) in BHS and Letteris as disjunctive.  
 95:10<sup>a</sup> Reading *merka* preceded immediately by *ga'ya* (= *meteg*) in Ginsburg and Letteris as disjunctive. BHS omits the *ga'ya* (= *meteg*).

## Summary of the Logoprosodic Analysis

1. Psalm 95 has seven strophes: 95:1–2, 3, 4–5, 6–7, 8–9, 10ab and 10c–11.

A	95:1–2	2 balanced dyads:	[14 + 14] + [14 + 12]	= 28 + 26	morae
B	95:3	balanced dyad:	[12 + 13]	= 12 + 13	morae
C	95:4–5	2 balanced dyads + pivot:	[12 + 12] + 7 + [9 + 14]	= 24 + 7 + 23	morae
X	95:6–7	2 balanced dyads + pivot:	[14 + 18] + 11 + [18 + 14]	= 32 + 11 + 32	morae
C'	95:8	balanced dyad:	[12 + 10]	= 12 + 10	morae
	95:9	balanced dyad:	[13 + 15]	= 13 + 15	morae
B'	95:10a–b	balanced dyad:	[16 + 16]	= 16 + 16	morae
A'	95:10c–11	balanced dyad + pivot:	[15 + 11 + 14]	= 15 + 11 + 14	morae

2. The first strophe (95:1–2) is a single part arranged in two subdivisions on the basis of word-count: 95: 1 and 2.
- 94:21–95:1     **17** words before *atnach*
  - 94:16–95:2     **34** (= **17** x 2) words after *atnach*
3. The second strophe (95:3) is a single part arranged in two subdivisions on the basis of word-count: 95: 3a and 3b.
- 94:22–95:3     **17** words after *atnach*
4. The third strophe (95:4–5) is a single part arranged in three subdivisions on the basis of word-count: 95: 4, 5a and 5b.
- 94:23–95:4     **17** words after *atnach*
  - 95:1–5            **17** words after *atnach*
5. The fourth strophe (95:6–7) is a single part arranged in three subdivisions on the basis of word-count: 95: 6, 7a and 7bc.
- 95:4–6            **23** words
  - 95:3–6            **32** words and **17** words before *atnach*
6. The fifth strophe (95:8–9) has two parts arranged in four subdivisions on the basis of word-count: 95:8a, 8b, 9a and 9b.

- 95:6–8           **26** words
- 95:4–8           **17** words after *atnach*
- 95:7–9           **26** words
- 95:5–9           **23** words before *atnach*
- 95:1–9           **69** (= **23** x 3) words and **32** words after *atnach*

7. The sixth strophe (95:10a–b) is a single part arranged in two subdivisions on the basis of word-count: 95: 95:10a and 10b.

- 95:1–10a       **78 = 46 + 32**           [compositional formula]
- 95:6–10       **46** (= **23** x 2) words
- 95:8–11       **34** (= **17** x 2) words

## Observations

1. The seven strophes of Psalm 95 may be outlined in a menorah pattern, which is determined primarily on prosodic grounds, as follows:

A	Come, let us sing to YHWH—let us make a joyful noise to him	[3.3]	95:1–2
B	YHWH is a great God—a great king above all gods	[2.2]	95:3
C	From depths to heights, sea and dry land—he made it all	[4.4]	95:4–5
X	<b>Come let us worship and bow down, for he is our God</b>	[5.5]	95:6–7
C'	God says: Harden not your hearts as in Meribah & Massah	[4.4]	95:8–9
B'	God says: “I punished them 40 years for their disobedience”	[2.2]	95:10ab
A'	God swore: “Never shall they enter my rest!”	[3.3]	95:10c–11

2. Within Psalm 95, the following thirteen words in verses 6 and 7 function in a **pivot pattern** in the arithmological center of the psalm, with 38 words on either side:

ונכרעה	And let us bow down,
נברכה לפני יהוה עשנו	Let us kneel before YHWH our maker.
<b>כי הוא אלהינו</b>	For he is our God;
ואנחנו עם מרעיתו	And we are the people of his pasture,
וצאן ידו	And the sheep of his hand.

When these words are read as part of each half of Psalm 95, the *Concentric Compositional Formula* becomes:

$$89 = 38 + 13 + 38 \quad [\text{word count—without 4-word heading}]$$

$$\text{or: } \mathbf{51 // 51} \quad [\text{word count—with “pivot” included in each half}]$$

If the focus is narrowed further to the three words highlighted in the “center within the center,” we find an alternate *Concentric Compositional Formula*: “For he is our God.”

89 = 43 + 3 + 43 [word count—with 4-word heading included]  
 or: 46 // 46 [word count—with “pivot” included in each half]

3. The 16-word “nested framework” (with the 4-word framework underlined) reads as follows:

- 1            לְכוּ נְרַנְנָה לַיהוָה    O come, let us sing joyfully to YHWH;  
                  נְרִיעָה לְצוּר יִשְׁעֵנוּ    Let us make a joyful noise to the Rock of our salvation.
- 2            נִקְדָּמָה פָּנָיו בַּתּוֹרָה    Let us come into his presence with songs of praise,  
                  בְּזִמְרוֹת נְרִיעָה לוֹ    With hymns let us make a joyful noise to him.
- 3            כִּי אֵל גָּדוֹל יְהוָה    For a great God is YHWH.

                 וְאָמַר עִם תְּעִי לִבָּב הֵם    And I said, “They are a people whose hearts go astray.”

                 וְהֵם לֹא־יִדְעוּ דַרְכֵי    And as for them, they do not regard my ways.

- 11           אֲשֶׁר־נִשְׁבַּעְתִּי בְּאַפִּי    Against whom I took an oath in my anger:

אִם־יִבְאוּן אֶל־מְנוּחָתִי    “Never shall they enter my rest.”

4. Summary of the concentric compositional formulae:

89 = 43 + 3 + 43    or: 46 // 46    {46 = 23 x 2}  
 89 = 38 + 13 + 38    or: 51 // 51    {51 = 17 x 3}

{with others in between}

89 = 16 + 57 + 16    or: 73 // 73  
 89 = 4 + 75 + 4    or: 79 // 79

46 = 18 + 10 + 18    or: 28 // 28    SAS (syntactic accentual-stress) units  
 {46 = 23 x 2}

26 = 10 + 6 + 10    or: 16 // 16    **briques** (primary SAS units)

5. In the prosodic structure of Psalm 95, 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 95 has 26 **briques** (primary SAS units), 22 of which are marked by: *soph pasuq* (11 times, at the end of each verse) and *atnach* (11 times, in each verse). The four additional boundaries are marked by *rəḥîa*<sup>˘</sup> (2 times, in vv. 7 and 10), *rəḥîa*<sup>˘</sup> *muḡraš*<sup>˘</sup> (v. 11), and *dəḥî* (v. 7).

6. The prosodic structure of Psalm 95 in terms of its primary syntactic accentual stress units (**briques**), may be displayed as follows [^ represents *atnach*; : represents *soph pasuq*; † represents *ole weyored*, and † represents all other accent markers]: as follows:

I	A	<sup>1</sup> <i>ləḳû nərannəḥ la-yhwh</i> ^	<i>nārî<sup>˘</sup>āḥ ləṣû yiš<sup>˘</sup>ēnî</i> :
		<sup>2</sup> <i>nəqaddəmāḥ pānāyḡw bəṭōrāḥ</i> ^	<i>bizmirôt nārîa<sup>˘</sup> lô</i> :
	B	<sup>3</sup> <i>kî ʾēl gādōl yhwh</i> ^	<i>ûmeleḳ gādōl ʿal kol ʾēlōhîm</i> :
	C	<sup>4</sup> <i>ʾāšer bəyāqō meḥqarê ʾāreṣ</i> ^	<i>wəṭōʾāpôt hārîm lô</i> :
		<sup>5</sup> <i>ʾāšer lô hayyām wəḥû<sup>˘</sup> ʿāsāḥû</i> ^	<i>wəyabbešet yādāyḡw yāšārû</i> :

II	X	<sup>6</sup> <i>bō<sup>˘</sup>û ništaḥăweḥ wəniḳrā<sup>˘</sup>āḥ</i> ^	<i>nibrəḳāḥ liṭnê yhwh ʿōsēnû</i> :
		<sup>7</sup> <i>kî</i> <span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">hû<sup>˘</sup></span> <i>ʾēlōhēnû</i> †	<i>waʾānaḥnû ʿam marʾîṭō</i> †
		<i>wəṣō<sup>˘</sup>n yāqō</i> ^	<i>hayyôm ʾim bəqōlô tišmā<sup>˘</sup>û</i> :

III	C'	<sup>8</sup> <i>al taqšû ləḇəḇəḳem kimrîḇāḥ</i> ^	<i>kəyôm massāḥ bammiḏbār</i> :
		<sup>9</sup> <i>āšer nissûnî ʾāḇôtēḳem</i> ^	<i>bəḥānûnî gam rā<sup>˘</sup>û pā<sup>˘</sup>ālf</i> :
	B'	<sup>10</sup> <i>ʾarbā<sup>˘</sup>ʿîm šānāḥ ʾāqūt bəḏōr</i> †	<i>wāʾōmar ʿam tō<sup>˘</sup>ē ləḇəḇ hēm</i> ^
	A'	<i>wəḥēm</i> †	<i>lō<sup>˘</sup> yāqō<sup>˘</sup>û ḏərāḳāy</i> :
		<sup>11</sup> <i>āšer nišba<sup>˘</sup>tî bəʾappî</i> ^	<i>ʾim yəḇō<sup>˘</sup>ûn ʾel mənḥātî</i> :

7. The 26 **briques** (primary SAS units) are distributed within 5 strophes in Psalm 95 as follows: **26 = (4 + 2 + 4) + 6 + (4 + 2 + 4)**. The **concentric compositional formula** (on the basis of **briques**) is 16 // 16.

The **arithmological center** of Psalm 95 falls on the word hûʔ (“he”) in 95:7a, with 44 words on either side. Psalm 95 has 46 SAS units, 28 **briques** (primary SAS units), 13 versets, 7 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 two syntactic accentual-stress units. There are 169 morae before and 161 morae after the word hûʔ (“he”) in 95:7a.

8. Terrien finds a prelude followed by five strophes in Psalm 95 (*The Psalms: Strophic Structure and Theological Commentary* (Eerdmans, 2003), p. 667–68. Howard finds three Sections, which seem to reflect “cantos” rather than “strophes” as such. He divides Psalm 95 into two major sections, the first of which (95:1–7c) is subdivided into two parts: vv. 1–5 and 6–7c. Van der Lugt, Labuschagne and Fokkelman find five strophes, with minor differences between them in matters of detail. The analysis presented here, which is based on the balance in mora-count and the concentric pattern in the distribution of syntactic accentual stress units, indicates that there are seven strophes, including Terrien’s so-called “prelude” in the first strophe, which are arranged in three cantos (vv. 1–5, 6–7 and 8–11).

Christensen	Terrien	David Howard	Van der Lugt & CJL	Fokkelman
I A 95:1–2	Prelude (v. 1)	I.1 95:1–5	I 1 95:1–2	I 1 95:1–2
B 95:3	1 95:2–3		2 95:3–5	2 95:3–5
C 95:4–5	2 95:4–5			
II <span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 0 2px;">X 95:6–7</span>	3 95:6–7	I.2 95:6–7c	II 3 95:6–7	3 95:6–7ab
III C' 95:8–9	4 95:8–9	II 95:7d–11	4 95:8–9	II 4 95:7c–9
B' 95:10ab	5 95:10–11		5 95:10–11	5 95:10–11
A' 95:10c–11				

The primary difference in terms of strophic structure results from the fact that the others assume a linear prosodic structure.

9. Labuschagne’s discussion of the disagreement between Van der Lugt and Fokkelman in regards the structure of 95:6–7 merits careful study (see his Observations 2 and 3). Fokkelman separates the last four words of v. 7 as a separate verseline, which becomes part of his Strophe 4, the beginning of his Stanza II (vv. 7c–11). Labuschagne correctly rejects this conclusion and, together with Van der Lugt, observes what he calls an “unmistakable caesura” between vv. 1–7 and vv. 8–11. At the same time, he does not rule out the specific function of v. 7c, “which clearly serves as a bridge between the prophet’s exhortation and YHWH’s oracle. In fact these four words spoken by the prophet, clearly introduce the divine speech.” In my opinion, this conclusion is strengthened by observing the concentric structure of Psalm 95 as a whole and noting that 95:6–7 constitutes the central strophe/canto of the poem, which by definition functions as the pivot connecting the two sections of Psalm 95—the words about YHWH (vv. 1–5) and the words of YHWH (vv. 8–11).

A similar situation appears in v. 10, where the logoprosodic analysis suggests that the last four words constitute a separate “verset” (or “verseline”) which introduces the seventh and concluding strophe (95:10c–11) in the form of a triad [i.e., a balanced dyad + pivot].

10. Determining the details of the musical and literary structures of Psalm 95 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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