

# Psalm 103:1–22

## Translation, Logoprosodic Analysis, and Observations

### Grace That Forgives

### Psalm 103:1–22

#### A. *Bless YHWH and Forget Not All His Benefits* (103:1–2)

[5.4]

103:1	Belonging to David /	<u>5 1</u>	<u>1 1 0</u>
		102:24–103:1a	42 25 17
	Let my soul bless / YHWH //	<u>13 2</u>	<u>4 4 0</u>
		102:27–103:1b	26 17 9
	And all that is within me / (bless) his holy name //	<u>12 2</u>	<u>5 0 5</u>
		102:27–103:1	31 17 14
103:2	Let my soul bless / YHWH //	<u>13 2</u>	<u>4 4 0</u>
		102:26–103:2a	41 24 17
	And let me not forget / all his benefits //	<u>12 2</u>	<u>4 0 4</u>
		102:24–103:2	59 33 26

#### B. *He Forgives Our Sins, Heals Us, and Redeems Us from the Pit* (103:3–5)

[4.7]

103:3	The one who forgives / <sup>a</sup> all your iniquities //	<u>15 2</u>	<u>3 3 0</u>
		102:28–103:3a	32 17 15
	The one who heals / all your diseases //	<u>17 2</u>	<u>3 0 3</u>
		102:28–103:3	35 17 18
103:4	The one who redeems from the Pit / <sup>a</sup> your life //	13 1	3 3 0
	the one who crowns you / with covenant-love and mercies //	<u>14 2</u>	<u>3 0 3</u>
		102:24–103:4	71 39 32
103:5	The one who satisfies with good / <sup>*</sup> your desires //	11 2	3 3 0
	(so that) your youth / is renewed like an eagle's //	<u>15 2</u>	<u>3 0 3</u>
		103:2–5	26 13 13

#### C. *He Made Known His Ways to Moses and to the Children of Israel* (103:6–7)

[4.4]

103:6	YHWH / <sup>a</sup> executes acts of righteousness //	<u>13 2</u>	<u>3 3 0</u>
		102:28–103:6a	50 26 24
	And judgments / for all that are oppressed //	<u>14 2</u>	<u>3 0 3</u>
		103:2–6	32 16 16

103:7 He made known his ways /<sup>a</sup> to Moses // 15 2      3 3 0  
102:29–103:7a      **51 27 24**

To the children of Israel / his deeds // 15 2      3 0 3  
102:23–103:7      **96 51 45**

**D. YHWH Is Merciful and Slow to Anger (cf. Exodus 34:6) (103:8) [2.2]**

103:8 Merciful and gracious /<sup>a</sup> is YHWH // 11 2      3 3 0  
103:1–8a      **51 27 24**

Slow of anger /<sup>b</sup> and plenteous in mercy // 10 2      4 0 4  
103:2–8      **45 22 23**

**E. But He Will Not Restrain His Anger Forever (cf. Exodus 34:7) (103:9–10) [4.4]**

103:9 He will not always /\* chide // 10 2      3 3 0  
and he will not keep forever / his anger // 11 2      3 0 3  
103:6–9      **23 11 12**

103:10 Not according to our sins / has he dealt with us // 18 2      4 4 0  
103:8–10a      **17 10 7**

And not according to our iniquities / 13 1      2 0 2  
has he requited us // 9 1      2 0 2  
103:4–10      **47 23 24**

**F. His Covenant-Love Is Like That of a Father for His Children (103:11–13) [4.4.4]**

103:11 For as the heaven is high / above the earth // 16 2      5 5 0  
so great is his covenant-love / toward those who fear him // 12 2      4 0 4  
103:10–11      **17 9 8**  
103:2–11      **68 34 34**

103:12 As far as the east / is from the west // 11 2      3 3 0  
(so far) has he removed from us / our transgressions // 15 2      4 0 4  
103:6–12      **47 23 24**

103:13 Like a father has compassion / on his children // 11 2      4 4 0  
103:9–13a      **34 19 15**

YHWH has compassion / on those who fear him // 12 2      4 0 4  
103:10–13      **32 16 16**

**G. He Knows Our Frailty—the Days of Humans are Like Grass** (103:14–15) [4.4]

103:14 For he knows /* our frame //	12	2	4	4	0
he remembers / that we are dust //	_15	2_	4	0	4
	103:12–14		<b>23</b>	11	12

103:15 As for humans / like grass are their days //	12	2	3	3	0
as a flower of the field / thus he flourishes //	_13	2_	4	0	4
	103:13–15		<b>23</b>	11	12

**H. The Wind Passes Over It and It Is Gone** (103:16) [2.2]

103:16 For the wind passes over it / <sup>a</sup> and it is gone //	_18	2_	5	5	0
	103:10–16a		<b>52</b>	28	24

And they will not know any more /* its place //	_16	2_	4	0	4
	103:13–16		<b>32</b>	16	16

**I. For Those Who Fear Him, YHWH’s Covenant-Love Endures Forever** (103:17–18)[4.4]

103:17 YHWH’s covenant-love / is from everlasting to everlasting /	19	2	5	5	0
on those who fear him //	6	1	2	2	0
and his righteousness /	_6	1_	1	0	1
	103:16–17c		<b>17</b>	12	5

Unto children’s children //	_7	1_	2	0	2
	103:15–17		<b>26</b>	15	11

103:18 To those who keep his covenant //	11	1	2	2	0
and to those that remember his charges / to do them //	_19	2_	3	0	3
	103:12–18		<b>54</b>	28	<b>26</b>

**J. YHWH Rules Over All—Bless YHWH You His Angels** (103:19–20) [7.4]

103:19 YHWH / in the heavens / he has prepared his throne //	16	3	4	4	0
[and]* his kingly power / rules over all //	_14	2_	3	0	3
	103:15–19		<b>38</b>	21	<b>17</b>

103:20 Bless YHWH / you his angels //	_14	2_	3	3	0
	103:16–20a		<b>34</b>	21	13

(You) strong and mighty ones / who perform his word //	17	2	4	4	0
hearkening / to the voice of his word //	_12	2_	3	0	3
	103:19–20		<b>17</b>	11	6

**K. Bless YHWH in All Places of His Dominion (103:21–22)**

[4.5]

103:21 Bless YHWH / all you his hosts //

103:18–21a	<u>15 2</u>	<u>4 4 0</u>
	26	17 9

You ministers of his / who do his pleasure //

103:15–21	<u>15 2</u>	<u>3 0 3</u>
	55	32 23

103:22 Bless YHWH / all his works /

103:16–22a	<u>14 2</u>	<u>4 4 0</u>
	52	33 19

In all places of his dominion //

103:17–22b	<u>11 1</u>	<u>3 3 0</u>
	46	31 15

Let my soul bless / YHWH //

103:16–22	<u>13 2</u>	<u>4 0 4</u>
	59	36 23
103:1–22	<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">167</span>	89 78

Scansion in SAS Units: (5.4).(4.7) . (4.4).(2.2) . (4.4).(4.4).(4.4) . (2.2).(4.4).(7.4).(4.5)

$$(9 + 11) + (8 + 4) + (8 + 12 + 8) + (4 + 8) + (11 + 9) = 32 + 28 + 32 = 92$$

or: 60 // 60 [with pivot counted in each half]

$$\{92 = 23 \times 4\}$$

Concentric Compositional Formula: 167 = 83 + 1 + 83 [word count—with heading]

**Notes:**

- 103:3<sup>a</sup> Reading the *mêrəkâ* here in BHS as disjunctive.
- 103:4<sup>a</sup> Reading the sequence of two successive occurrences of *munaḥ* in BHS as disjunctive.
- 103:5<sup>a</sup> Reading the sequence of two successive occurrences of *munaḥ* in BHS as disjunctive.
- 103:6<sup>a</sup> Reading the sequence of two successive occurrences of *munaḥ* in BHS as disjunctive.
- 103:7<sup>a</sup> Reading the sequence of two successive occurrences of *munaḥ* in BHS as disjunctive.
- 103:8<sup>a</sup> Reading the sequence of two successive occurrences of *munaḥ* in BHS as disjunctive.
- 103:8<sup>b</sup> Reading the sequence of *tarḥā* followed by *munaḥ* in BHS as disjunctive.
- 103:9<sup>a</sup> Reading the *mêrəkâ* preceded immediately by *gāʿyâ* (= *meteg*) here in BHS as disjunctive.
- 103:14<sup>a</sup> Reading the sequence of *tarḥā* followed by *munaḥ* in BHS as disjunctive.
- 103:16<sup>a</sup> Reading the sequence of two successive occurrences of *munaḥ* together with *gāʿya* (= *meteg*) in BHS as disjunctive.
- 103:16<sup>b</sup> Reading the sequence of *tarḥā* followed by *munaḥ* in BHS as disjunctive.

## Summary of the Logoprosodic Analysis

- Psalm 103 has eleven strophes: 103:1–2, 3–5, 6–7, 8, 9–10, 11–13, 14–15, 16, 17–18, 19–20 and 21–22.

A	103:1 $\alpha$	heading—does not scan as part of the prosodic structure in this strophe			
	103:1–2	2 balanced dyads:	[13 + 12] + [13 + 12]	= 25 + 25	morae
B	103:3	balanced dyad:	[15 + 17]	= 15 + 17	morae
	103:4–5	2 balanced dyads:	[13 + 14] + [11 + 15]	= 27 + 26	morae
C	103:6	balanced dyad:	[13 + 14]	= 13 + 14	morae
	103:7	balanced dyad:	[15 + 15]	= 15 + 15	morae
D	103:8	balanced dyad:	[11 + 10]	= 11 + 10	morae
E	103:9–10	2 balanced dyads + pivot:	[10 + 11] + 18 + [13 + 9]	= 21 + 18 + 22	morae

X	103:11–12	2 balanced dyads:	[16 + 12] + [11 + 15]	= 28 + 26	morae
	103:13	balanced dyad:	[11 + 12]	= 11 + 12	morae

E'	103:14–15	2 balanced dyads:	[12 + 15] + [12 + 13]	= 27 + 25	morae
D'	103:16	balanced dyad:	[18 + 16]	= 18 + 16	morae
C'	103:17–18	2 balanced dyads + pivot:	[19 + (6 + 6)] + 7 + [11 + 19]	= 31 + 7 + 30	morae
B'	103:19–20	2 balanced dyads + pivot:	[16+14] + 14 + [17+12]	= 31 + 14 + 29	morae
A'	103:21	balanced dyad:	[15 + 15]	= 15 + 15	morae
	103:22	balanced dyad + pivot:	[14 + 11 + 13]	= 14 + 11 + 13	morae

- The first strophe (103:1–2) has two parts arranged in three subdivisions on the basis of word-count: 103:1a, 1bc and 2.
  - 102:27–103:1 **17** words before *atnach*
  - 102:24–103:2 **26** words after *atnach*
- The second strophe (103:3–5) has two parts arranged in four subdivisions on the basis of word-count: 103:3a, 3b, 4 and 5.
  - 102:28–103:3 **17** words before *atnach*
  - 102:24–103:4 **32** words after *atnach*
  - 103:2–5 **26** words
- The third strophe (103:6–7) has two parts arranged in four subdivisions on the basis of word-count: 103:6a, 6b, 7a and 7b.
  - 103:2–6 **32** words
  - 102:23–103:7 **51** (= 17 x 3) words before *atnach*
  - 103:1–7 **23** words (without heading) before *atnach*
- The fourth strophe (103:8) is a single part arranged in two subdivisions on the basis of word-count: 103:8a and 8b.
  - 103:2–8 **23** words after *atnach*

6. The fifth strophe (103:9–10) is a single part arranged in three subdivisions on the basis of word-count: 103:9, 10a and 10b.
- 103:6–9           **23** words
  - 103:2–9           **26** words after *atnach*
  - 103:4–10          **23** words before *atnach*
7. The sixth strophe (103:11–13) has two parts arranged in three subdivisions on the basis of word-count: 103:11, 12 and 13.
- 103:10–11       **17** words
  - 103:9–11        **23** words
  - 103:2–11        **68 = 34 + 34**           [compositional formula—all 3 divisible by **17**]
  - 103:6–12        **23** words before *atnach*
  - 103:10–13       **32** (=  $2 \times 2 \times 2 \times 2 \times 2 = 2^5$ ) words
  - 103:8–13        **23** words after *atnach*
  - 103:5–13        **32** words after *atnach*
8. The seventh strophe (103:14–15) is a single part arranged in two subdivisions on the basis of word-count: 103:14 and 15.
- 103:12–14       **23** words
  - 103:11–14       **32** words
  - 103:9–14        **46 = 23 + 23**           [compositional formula]
  - 103:8–14        **26** words before *atnach*
  - 103:6–14        **32** words after *atnach*
  - 103:13–15       **23** words
  - 103:9–15        **26** words before *atnach*
9. The eighth strophe (103:16) is a single part arranged in two subdivisions on the basis of word-count: 103:16a and 16b.
- 103:13–16       **32** words
10. The ninth strophe (103:17–18) is a single part arranged in three subdivisions on the basis of word-count: 103:17a–c, 17d and 18.
- 103:15–17       **26** words
  - 103:13–17       **23** words before *atnach*
  - 103:12–17       **49 = 26 + 23** words [compositional formula]
  - 103:12–18       **26** words after *atnach*
11. The tenth strophe (103:19–20) is a single part arranged in three subdivisions on the basis of word-count: 103:19, 20a and 20bc.
- 103:15–19       **17** words after *atnach*
  - 103:12–19       **32** words before *atnach*
  - 103:19–20       **17** words
  - 103:17–20       **32** words

12. The eleventh strophe (103:21–22) is a single part arranged in five subdivisions on the basis of word-count: 103:21a, 21b, 22a, 22b and 22c.

- 103:20–21      **17** words
- 103:15–21      **55 = 32 + 23**      [compositional formula—double *kabod*-number]
- 103:16–22      **23** words after *atnach*

## Observations

1. The 11 strophes in Psalm 103 may be outlined in a nested menorah pattern, as follows:

### **1<sup>st</sup> Level Menorah: Grace That Forgives (Ps 103:1–29)**

A	Bless YHWH and forget not all his benefits	[5.4]	103:1–2
B	He forgives our sins, heals us, and redeems us from the Pit	[4.7]	103:3–5
C	He made known his ways to Moses and the children of Israel	[4.4]	103:6–7
X	<b>YHWH’s covenant-love is that of a father for his children</b>	—	103:8–16
C’	For those who fear him, YHWH’s covenant-love endures forever	[6.5]	103:17–18
B’	YHWH rules over all—bless YHWH you his angels	[2.2]	103:19–20
A’	Bless YHWH in all places of his dominion	[6.7]	103:21–22

### **Inner Core: (Ps 103:8–22)**

A	YHWH is merciful and slow to anger (cf. Exod 34:6)	[2.2]	103:8
B	He has not dealt with us according to our sins	[6.6]	103:9–10
X	<b>His covenant-love is like that of a father for his children</b>	[4.4.4]	103:11–13
B’	He knows our frailty—the days of humans are like grass	[6.6]	103:14–15
A’	The wind passes over it and it is gone	[2.2]	103:16

2. In terms of the 167 words (including the 1-word heading) in Psalm 103, the **arithmological center** falls on the word אֵת (untranslatable particle—marking a definite direct object) in the second half of verse 12. The initial **concentric compositional formula** is:

$$167 = 83 + 1 + 83 \quad [\text{word count—with heading}]$$

$$\text{or: } 84 // 84 \quad [\text{word count—with “pivot” included in each half}]$$

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

12	כרחק מזרח ממערב	As far as the east is from the west
	פשיענו אֵת הרחיק ממנו	(So far) has he removed from us our transgressions
13	כרחם אב על בנים	Like a father has compassion on his children

In this instance, the **concentric compositional formula** becomes:

$$167 = 78 + 11 + 78 \quad [\text{word count—with heading}]$$

$$\text{or: } 89 // 89 \quad [\text{word count—with “pivot” included in each half}]$$

$$\{78 = 26 \times 3\}$$

The **meaningful center** may be enlarged to include 14 words on either side of the **arithmological center**, as follows:

11	כי כנבה שמים על הארץ	For as the heaven is high above the earth
	גבר חסדו על יראיו	So great is his <i>hesed</i> toward those who fear him
12	כרחק מזרח ממערב	As far as the east is from the west
	הרחיק ממנו את פשעינו	(So far) has he removed from us our transgressions
13	כרחם אב על בנים	Like a father has compassion on his children
	רחם יהוה על יראיו	YHWH has compassion on those who fear him.
14	כי הוא ידע יצרנו זכור	For he knows our frame, he remembers

When these words are read as part of each half of Psalm 103, the **concentric compositional formula** becomes:

$$167 = 69 + 29 + 69 \quad [\text{word count—with heading}]$$

$$\text{or: } 98 // 98 \quad [\text{word count—with “pivot” included in each half}]$$

Other evidence suggests the possibility that verse 11 may be considered as a “center” of sorts in Psalm 103, for another way of looking at the **meaningful center** is to note the following **compositional formulae**:

$$103:1-11 \quad 78 = 39 + 39$$

$$103:11-22 \quad 98 = 55 + 43$$

In this reading, the **concentric compositional formula** becomes:

$$167 = 69 + 9 + 89 \quad \text{or: } 78 // 98 \quad (\text{with the 9 words of verse 11 shared in each “half”})$$

3. The 18-word “nested framework” (with the 7-word framework underlined) reads as follows:

1	<u>לְדָוִד</u>	<u>Belonging to David</u>
	<u>בְּרַכֵּי נַפְשִׁי אֶת־יְהוָה</u>	<u>Let my soul bless YHWH</u>
	וְכָל־קִרְבִּי אֶת־שֵׁם קִדְשׁוֹ	And all that is in me (bless) his holy name.
2	בְּרַכֵּי נַפְשִׁי אֶת־יְהוָה	Let my soul bless YHWH
	וְאַל־תִּשְׁכַּחַי כָּל־גַּמְלוֹתָיו	And let me not forget all his benefits.
	מִשְׁרָתָיו עֹשֵׂי רְצוֹנוֹ	You ministers of his who do his pleasure,
22	בְּרַכּוּ יְהוָה כָּל־מַעֲשָׂיו	Bless YHWH all his works.

בכל־מקומות ממשלתו In all places of his dominion  
ברכי נפשי את־יהוה Let my soul bless YHWH.

4. Preliminary data on the matter of letter-count in Psalm 103 from David Crookes reveals the following:

Total letter count in BHS : 674  
 Total letter count in Letteris, Ginsburg, etc. 675 = 3x3x3x5x5

The additional letter in the Letteris Bible (and other manuscripts and editions) is the vowel-letter *wau* in the last word of v. 3 [reading תחל־ואיכי = 400+8+30+6+1+10+20+10 = 485].

The absolute **gematric center** falls on the 4<sup>th</sup> letter of the 4<sup>th</sup> word of v. 12 [הרה־ויק], i.e., the 338<sup>th</sup> letter.

Gematric compositional formula: **675 = 337 + 1 + 337**

David Crookes points out that 337 is the 400 gematric value of the common authorial phrase “mizmor of David” (לְדָוִד מִזְמוֹר) = [30+4+6+4] + [40+7+40+6+200] = 44 + 293 = 337). The 675 letters may stand for the articulate word העֵתֶר (“the incense, perfumed smoke, fragrant vapor”) [= 5+70+400+200]. The three-letter word וִיק (made up of the middle letter ם with its two bordering letters ן and ך) might be taken to denote “the fire recess of the altar,” as in Ezekiel 43:13, 14 and 17.

Ernest McClain notes that 675 is the number of sheep YHWH requires from the Midianite booty in Numbers 31:37, which prove essential to the throne of heaven. They stand in the far east, while the forgotten “cornerstone” lies in the west.

5. Summary of the concentric compositional formulae:

167 = **78** + 11 + **78** or: 89 // 89

167 = **69** + 29 + **69** or: 98 // 98

{with others in between}

167 = 14 + 139 + 14 or: **153 // 153**

167 = 7 + **153** + 7 or: 160 // 160

**92** = 40 + 12 + 40 or: **52 // 52** syntactic accentual-stress units

{**92** = **23** x 4; **52** = **26** x 2 and 40 = **17** + **23**}

**46** = 20 + 6 + 20 or: **26 // 26** **briques** (primary accentual-stress units)

{**46** = **23** x 2}

6. In the prosodic structure of Psalm 103, the basic building blocks (**briques**) in each poetic **verset** are the **primary SAS (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 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 103 has **46 briques** (primary SAS units), all but one of which are marked by: *soph pasuq* (22 times, at the end of each verse), *atnach* (22 times, in each verse), and *ole weyored* (1 time, in verses 20). The one additional **brique** (in verse 19) is marked with *revia mugrash*.

7. The prosodic structure of Psalm 103, 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 other accents ]:

- |     |   |   |   |
|-----|---|---|---|
| I   | A | <sup>1</sup> <i>ləḏāwīd bārāḳī nāp̄šī ʿet yhw̄h</i> ^ | <i>wəḵol qəṛābay ʿet šēm qodšō :</i>    |
|     |   | <sup>2</sup> <i>bārāḳī nāp̄šī ʿet yhw̄h</i> ^         | <i>wəʿal tiškəḥī kol gəməlāyw :</i>     |
|     | B | <sup>3</sup> <i>hassōlēah ləḵol ʿāwōnēḳī</i> ^        | <i>hārōpēʿ ləḵol taḥlūʿāyəkī :</i>      |
|     |   | <sup>4</sup> <i>haggōʿēl miššəḥat ḥayāyəkī</i> ^      | <i>hamʿatṭərēḳī ḥesed wəraḥāmīm :</i>   |
|     |   | <sup>5</sup> <i>hammasbīaʿ bʿatṭōḇ ʿedyēḳ</i> ^       | <i>tīḥadēs kannes nəʿūrāyəkī :</i>      |
| II  | C | <sup>6</sup> <i>ʿōsēh šəḏāqōṭ yhw̄h</i> ^             | <i>ūmišpāṭīm ləḵol ʿāšūqīm :</i>        |
|     |   | <sup>7</sup> <i>yōḏīaʿ dəṛāḳāyw ləməšeh</i> ^         | <i>libnē yiśrāʿēl ʿālīlōṭāyw :</i>      |
|     | D | <sup>8</sup> <i>raḥūm wəḥannūn yhw̄h</i> ^            | <i>ʿereḳ ʿappayim wəraḥ ḥāsed :</i>     |
| III | E | <sup>9</sup> <i>lōʿ lāneṣah yārīḇ</i> ^               | <i>wəlōʿ ləʿōlām yiṭṭōr :</i>           |
|     |   | <sup>10</sup> <i>lōʿ kaḥāṭʿēnū ʿāsāh lānū</i> ^       | <i>wəlōʿ kaʿāwōnōṭēnūgāmal ʿālēnū :</i> |



Christensen	Terrien	Van der Lugt
I A 103:1–2	Prelude (vv.1–2)	
B 103:3–5	1 103:3–5	
II C 103:6–7	2 103:6–8	
D 103:8		
III E 103:9–10	3 103:9–11	
X 103:11–13	4 103:12–14	
E' 103:14–15	5 103:15–17	
IV D' 103:16		
C' 103:17–18	6 103:18–20	
V B' 103:19–20		
A' 103:21–22	Postlude (vv. 21–22)	

The primary differences in terms of strophic structure observed here stem from the fact that Terrien fails to locate the **meaningful center** and he assumes a linear prosodic structure with six similar strophes, “each of which comprehends three bicola, with the exception of tricola toward the climax (vv. 17 and 20), where a thematic stress entails the lengthening of the rhythm.” (p. 702).

11. The evidence from the logoprosodic analysis presents a somewhat confusing picture in Psalm 103, as shown in the following list of significant compositional numbers at the boundaries of the verses counting from the beginning.

103:1–2	<b>17</b> words (without heading)
103:1–3	<b>23</b> words (without heading)
103:1–5	<b>17</b> words (without heading) before <i>atnach</i>
103:1–7	<b>23</b> words (without heading) before <i>atnach</i>
103:1–8	<b>26</b> words (without heading) before <i>atnach</i>
103:1–12	<b>43</b> words (without heading) after <i>atnach</i>
103:1–14	<b>51</b> (= <b>17</b> x 3) words (without heading) after <i>atnach</i>
103:1–15	<b>52</b> (= <b>26</b> x 2) words (without heading) before <i>atnach</i>
103:1–19	<b>138</b> (= <b>23</b> x 6) words (without heading) and <b>68</b> (= <b>17</b> x 4) words after <i>atnach</i>
103:1–14	<b>51</b> (= <b>17</b> x 3) words (without heading) after <i>atnach</i>
103:1–22	<b>78</b> (= <b>26</b> x 3) words (without heading) after <i>atnach</i>
103:1–8	<b>55</b> [= <b>23</b> + <b>32</b> ] words
103:1–10	<b>69</b> (= <b>23</b> x 3) words and <b>34</b> (= <b>17</b> x 2) words before <i>atnach</i>
103:1–11	<b>78</b> (= <b>26</b> x 3) words
103:1–12	<b>85</b> (= <b>17</b> x 5) words
103:1–13	<b>46</b> (= <b>23</b> x 2) words before <i>atnach</i>
103:1–14	<b>51</b> (= <b>17</b> x 3) words after <i>atnach</i>
103:1–16	<b>58</b> [= <b>26</b> + <b>32</b> ] words before <i>atnach</i>
103:1–20	<b>78</b> (= <b>26</b> x 3) words before <i>atnach</i>
103:1–21	<b>156</b> (= <b>26</b> x 6) words before <i>atnach</i>
103:1–22	<b>78</b> (= <b>26</b> x 3) words after <i>atnach</i>

It is not possible to utilize any of the four compositional numbers (**17, 23, 26** and **32**) until the end of verse 2, which leaves 21 possible boundaries to work with. In this instance the evidence is puzzling. In 9 out of 21 of these boundaries (or more than 42% of the time) a multiple of one of these four compositional numbers is present, if the one-word heading is excluded. At the same time, in 8 out of 21 of these boundaries (or more than 38% of the time) a multiple of these four compositional numbers is present, if the one-word heading is included. Some of these boundaries fall in both categories because the presence or absence of the one-word heading has no effect on the number of words after *atnach*. The evidence for the first half of Psalm 103 favors the exclusion of the heading, whereas the evidence for the second half favors its inclusion.

If the evidence is combined, we find that in 16 out of 21 possible boundaries (or more than 76% of the time) we find a multiple of one of the four primary compositional numbers. The evidence thus suggests the possibility of deliberate design at the point of the numerical composition of Psalm 103—with and without the heading.

12. It is possible to scan the opening strophe of Psalm 103 in an alternate way as follows:

103:1	Belonging to David /	5	1	1	1	0
	Let my soul bless / YHWH //	13	2	4	4	0
	and all that is within me /	_6	1_	<u>2</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>2</u>
				7	5	2
	(Bless) his holy name //	_6	1_	<u>3</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>3</u>
				10	5	5
103:2	Let my soul bless / YHWH //	13	2	4	4	0
	and forget not / all his benefits //	<u>12</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>4</u>
		103:1-2 (without heading)		<b>17</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>9</b>

A 103:1-2 heading—scanned as part of the prosodic structure in this strophe:  
 2 balanced dyads + pivot:  $([5 + 13] + 6) + 6 + (13+12) = 24 + 6 + 25$  morae

It is possible that both scansion of this opening strophe are correct and that the ambiguity between the inclusion and exclusion of the one-word heading in determining the verse boundaries (see Observation 11) is intentional on the part of the author/composer of this psalm.

13. Determining the details of the musical and literary structures of Psalm 103 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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