

Psalm 111:1–10

Translation, Prosodic Analysis, and Observations

Acrostic Hymn: Praise for the Lord of Wonders

Psalm 111:1–10

A. *I Will Praise YHWH in the Congregation of the Upright* (111:1) [2.2]

111:1	Hallelujah [Praise Yah] /	<u>6 1</u>	<u>2 2 0</u>
		110:4–111:1a	36 19 17
	𐤒 I will praise YHWH ^a with all my heart //	13 1	<u>4 4 0</u>
		110:4–111:1b	40 23 17
	𐤑 In the congregation of the upright / ^b and the assembly //	<u>13 2</u>	<u>3 0 3</u>
		110:4–111:1	43 23 20

B. *YHWH's Words and Deeds are Great—His Righteousness Endures* (111:2–3) [4.3]

111:2	𐤒 Great / are the words of YHWH //	<u>13 2</u>	<u>3 3 0</u>
			46 26 20
	𐤑 They are sought / by all those who delight in them //	<u>11 2</u>	<u>3 0 3</u>
		110:4–111:2	49 26 23
111:3	𐤑 Splendor and majesty are his deeds //	<u>11 1</u>	<u>3 3 0</u>
		110:6–111:3a	34 19 15
	𐤒 And his righteousness / endures forever //	<u>13 2</u>	<u>3 0 3</u>
		110:4–111:3	55 29 26

C. *In His Great Mercy YHWH Remembers His Covenant Forever* (111:4–5) [4.4]

111:4	𐤒 He made a memorial / for his wonders //	<u>14 2</u>	<u>3 3 0</u>
		110:4–111:4a	58 32 26
	𐤑 Merciful and compassionate / ^a is YHWH //	<u>11 2</u>	<u>3 0 3</u>
		110:4–111:4	61 32 29
111:5	𐤑 Food he gave / ^a to those who fear him //	<u>11 2</u>	<u>3 3 0</u>
		110:6–111:5a	46 25 21
	𐤒 He will remember forever / his covenant //	<u>13 2</u>	<u>3 0 3</u>
		110:4–111:5	67 35 32

D. YHWH Revealed His Works and Gave the Nations to His People (111:6) [2.2]

111:6	𐤎	The power of his works / he revealed to his people //	<u> 14 2_</u>	<u> 4 4 0</u>
			110:5–111:6a	60 32 28
	𐤛	Giving to them / the inheritance of nations //	<u> 13 2_</u>	<u> 4 0 4</u>
			111:3–6	26 16 10
			110:5–111:6	64 32 32

E. The Works of His Hands are a Source of Strength Forever (111:7–8) [4.4]

111:7	𐤎	The works of his hands / are faithful and just //	<u> 15 2_</u>	<u> 4 4 0</u>
			111:3–7a	30 17 13
	𐤎	Trustworthy / are all his precepts //	<u> 12 2_</u>	<u> 3 0 3</u>
			111:1–7	48 26 22
111:8	𐤎	They are a source of strength forever / ^a and ever //	<u> 13 2_</u>	<u> 3 3 0</u>
			111:4–8a	30 17 13
	𐤛	To be performed / with truthfulness and rectitude //	<u> 12 2_</u>	<u> 3 0 3</u>
			111:2–8	45 23 22

F. YHWH's Covenant Is Eternal; to Fear Him Is the Fount of Wisdom (111:9–10a) [3.4]

111:9	𐤎	A ransom / he sent for his people /	<u> 11 2_</u>	<u> 3 3 0</u>
			111:5–9a	30 17 13
	𐤎	He commanded that his covenant (be kept) forever //	<u> 13 1_</u>	<u> 3 3 0</u>
			111:6–9b	27 17 10
	𐤎	Holy and full of reverence / ^a is his name //	<u> 12 2_</u>	<u> 3 0 3</u>
			111:4–9	42 23 19
111:10	𐤎	The beginning of wisdom / is the fear of YHWH /	<u> 13 2_</u>	<u> 4 4 0</u>
			111:7–10a	26 17 9

G. Those Who Keep His Covenant Understand—His Praise Endures (111:10bc) [2.2]

	𐤛	They understand what is good / all who practice it //	<u> 12 2_</u>	<u> 4 4 0</u>
			111:8–10b	23 17 6
	𐤎	His praise / will endure forever //	<u> 13 2_</u>	<u> 3 0 3</u>
			111:8–10	26 17 9
			111:1–10	74 43 31

Scansion in Accentual-Stress Units: (4.7) . (4.4) . (2.2) . (4.4) . (7.4)
 $(11 + 8) + 4 + (8 + 11) = 19 + 4 + 19 = 42$
 or: **23 // 23** {42 = 2x3x7}

Concentric Compositional Formula: $74 = 37 + 0 + 37$ [word count—with heading]

Notes:

- 111:1^a Reading the *dəḥî* here in BHS as conjunctive.
- 111:1^b Reading the sequence of *tarḥâ* followed immediately by *mûnaḥ* in BHS as disjunctive.
- 111:4^a Reading the sequence of *mērəḵā* followed by *mûnaḥ* in BHS as disjunctive.
- 111:5^a Reading the sequence of *mûnaḥ* preceded immediately by *dəḥî* here in BHS as disjunctive.
- 111:8^a Reading the sequence of two successive occurrences of *mûnaḥ* in BHS as disjunctive.
- 111:9^a Reading the sequence of *tarḥâ* followed immediately by *mûnaḥ* in BHS as disjunctive.

Summary of the Logoprosodic Analysis

1. Psalm 111 has seven strophes: 111:1, 2–3, 4–5, 6, 7–8, 9–10a and 10bc.

A	111:1a	{the 2-word rubric ["Hallelu-Yah"] stands outside the prosodic structure of the psalm itself}			
	111:1bc	balanced dyad:	[13 + 13]	= 13 + 13	morae
B	111:2–3	2 balanced dyads:	[13 + 11] + [11 + 13]	= 24 + 24	morae
C	111:4–5	2 balanced dyads:	[14 + 11] + [11 + 13]	= 25 + 24	morae
X	111:6	balanced dyad:	[14 + 13]	= 14 + 13	morae
C'	111:7–8	2 balanced dyads:	[15 + 12] + [13 + 12]	= 27 + 25	morae
B'	111:9–10a	2 balanced dyads:	[11 + 13] + [12 + 13]	= 24 + 25	morae
A'	111:10ab	balanced dyad:	[12 + 13]	= 12 + 13	morae

2. The first strophe (111:1) is a single part arranged in three subdivisions on the basis of word-count: 111:1a, 1b and 1c.
 - 110:4–111:1 **23** words before *atnach*
3. The second strophe (111:2–3) is a single part arranged in two subdivisions on the basis of word-count: 111:2 and 3.
 - 110:4–111:2 **49 = 26 + 23** [compositional formula]
 - 110:4–111:3 **26** words after *atnach*
4. The third strophe (111:4–5) is a single part arranged in two subdivisions on the basis of word-count: 111:4 and 5.
 - 110:4–111:4 **32** words before *atnach*
 - 110:4–111:5 **32** words after *atnach*
5. The fourth strophe (111:6) is a single part arranged in two subdivisions on the basis of word-count: 111:6a and 6b.
 - 110:5–111:6a **32** words after *atnach*

- 111:3–6 **26** words
6. The fifth strophe (111:7–8) is a single part arranged in two subdivisions on the basis of word-count: 111:7 and 8.
 - 111:1–7 **26** words before *atnach*
 - 111:4–8 **17** words before *atnach*
 7. The sixth strophe (111:9–10a) is a single part arranged in four subdivisions on the basis of word-count: 111:9a, 9b, 9c and 10a.
 - 111:4–9 **23** words before *atnach*
 - 111:8–10a **26** words and **17** words before *atnach*
 8. The seventh strophe (111:9bc) is a single part arranged in two subdivisions on the basis of word-count: 111:9b and 9c.
 - 111:8–10b **23** words and **17** words before *atnach*
 - 111:8–10 **26** words and **17** words before *atnach*

Observations

1. The seven strophes in Psalm 111 may be outlined in a menorah pattern, as follows:

A	I will praise YHWH in the congregation of the upright	בא	[2.2] 111:1
B	YHWH's words and deeds are great—his righteousness endures	והדרג	[4.3] 111:2–3
C	In his great mercy YHWH remembers his covenant forever	יטחז	[4.4] 111:4–5
X	YHWH revealed his works & gave his people the nations	לכ	[2.2] 111:6
C'	The works of his hands are a source of strength forever	עסנמ	[4.4] 111:7–8
B'	YHWH's covenant is eternal—to fear him is the fount of wisdom	רקצפ	[3.4] 111:9–10a
A'	Those keep his covenant understand—his praise endures forever	תש	[2.2] 111:10bc

2. In terms of the 74 words in Psalm 111, the **arithmological center** falls between the words **לעמו לתת** (“to his people / to give”) in the middle of 111:6. The initial **concentric compositional formula** is:

$$74 = 37 + 0 + 37 \quad \text{[word count—with heading]}$$

$$\text{or: } 37 // 37 \quad \text{[word count—with “pivot” included in each half]}$$

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

6 כח מעשיו הגיד לעמו The power of his works he revealed to his people,
 לתת להם נחלת גוים Giving to them the inheritance of nations.

The corresponding **compositional formula** then becomes:

74 = 33 + 8 + 33 [word count—with heading]
 or: 41 // 41 [word count—with “pivot” included in each half]

The **meaningful center** may be expanded by including seven words on either side of this **arithmological center**, as follows:

	יזכר לעולם בריתו	He will remember forever his covenant
6	כח מעשיו הגיד לעמו	The power of his works he revealed to his people,
	לתת להם נחלת גוים	Giving to them the inheritance of nations.
7	מעשי ידיו אמת	The works of his hands are faithful.

The corresponding **compositional formula** then becomes:

74 = 30 + 14 + 30 [word count—with heading]
 or: 44 // 44 [word count—with “pivot” included in each half]
 rd count—with “pivot” included in each half]

The **meaningful center** may be expanded still further by including fourteen words on either side of this **arithmological center**, as follows:

4b	לנפלאותיו	As for his wonders,
	חנון ורחום יהוה	Merciful and compassionate is YHWH
5	טרף נתן ליראיו	Food he gave to those who fear him
	יזכר לעולם בריתו	He will remember forever his covenant
6	כח מעשיו הגיד לעמו	The power of his works he revealed to his people,
	לתת להם נחלת גוים	Giving to them the inheritance of nations.
7	מעשי ידיו אמת ומשפט	The works of his hands are faithful and just.
	נאמנים כל פקודיו	Trustworthy are all his precepts
8	סמוכים לעד לעולם	They are a source of strength forever and ever

The corresponding **compositional formula** then becomes:

74 = 23 + 28 + 23 [word count—with heading]
 or: 51 // 51 [word count—with “pivot” included in each half]

The **meaningful center** may be expanded further yet by including twenty words on either side of this **arithmological center**, as follows:

3b	פעלו וצדקתו עמדת לעד	His work and his righteousness endures forever
4	זכר עשה לנפלאותיו	A memorial he made for his wonders
	חנון ורחום יהוה	Merciful and compassionate is YHWH
5	טרף נתן ליראיו	Food he gave to those who fear him
	יזכר לעולם בריתו	He will remember forever his covenant
6	כח מעשיו הגיד לעמו	The power of his works he revealed to his people,
	לתת להם נחלת גוים	Giving to them the inheritance of nations.

7	מעשי ידיו אמת ומשפט	The works of his hands are faithful and just.
	נאמנים כל פקודיו	Trustworthy are all his precepts
8	סמוכים לעד לעולם	They are a source of strength forever and ever
	עשויים באמת וישר	To be performed with truthfulness and rectitude
9	פדות שלח לעמו	A ransom he sent for his people.

The corresponding **compositional formula** then becomes:

$$74 = 17 + 40 + 17 \quad \text{[word count—with heading]}$$

$$\text{or: } 57 // 57 \quad \text{[word count—with “pivot” included in each half]}$$

3. The 20-word “nested framework” (with the 8-word framework underlined) reads as follows:

1	<u>הללו יה</u>	<u>Hallelu-Yah</u>
	<u>אודה יהוה בכל-לבב</u>	<u>I will praise YHWH with all my heart.</u>
	<u>בסוד ישרים ועדה</u>	<u>In the congregation of the upright and the assembly.</u>
2	גדלים מעשי יהוה	Great are the words of YHWH;
	דרושים לכל-חפציהם	They are sought by all those who delight in them.
3	הודו-הדרר פעלו וצדקתו	Splendor and majesty are his deeds and his righteousness.
9	פדות שלח לעמו	A ransom he sent for his people;
	צוה-לעולם בריתו	He commanded that his covenant (be kept) forever.
	קדוש ונורא שמו	Holy and full of reverence is his name,
10	<u>ראשית חכמה יראת יהוה</u>	<u>The beginning of wisdom is the fear of YHWH.</u>
	<u>שכל טוב לכל-עשיהם</u>	<u>[O YHWH,] all who practice it understand what is good;</u>
	<u>תהלתו עמדת לעד</u>	<u>His praise will endure forever.</u>

4. Summary of the concentric compositional formulae:

$$74 = 33 + 8 + 33 \quad \text{or: } 41 // 41 \quad \text{word-count}$$

$$74 = 30 + 14 + 30 \quad \text{or: } 44 // 44$$

{with others in between}

$$74 = 20 + 34 + 20 \quad \text{or: } 54 // 54$$

$$74 = 8 + 58 + 8 \quad \text{or: } 66 // 66$$

$$42 = 19 + 4 + 19 \quad \text{or: } 23 // 23 \quad \text{SAS (syntactic accentual-stress) units}$$

{42 = 2x3x7}

$$23 = 6 + 11 + 6 \quad \text{or: } 17 // 17 \quad \text{briques (primary SAS units)}$$

5. In the prosodic structure of Psalm 111, 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 *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 111 has **23 briques** (primary SAS units), of which 20 are marked by *soph pasuq* (10 times, at the end of each verse), *atnach* (10 times, in each verse). The boundaries of the remaining three **briques** are marked by *rəḥîa*^c (2 times, in vv. 9 and 10) and *rəḥîa*^c *muḡraš* (v. 6).

6. The prosodic structure of Psalm 111, in terms of its primary SAS 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 | ¹ <i>haləlu yāh</i> ṽ _o deh yhw h bəkol ləḥab ^ | <i>bəsōd yəšārîm wəʿēdāh :</i> |
| | B | ² <i>gəḏōlîm maʿāsê yhw h ^</i> | <i>dərûšîm ləkol ḥepšêhem :</i> |
| | | ³ <i>hōd wəḥādār poʿōlō ^</i> | <i>wəsidqātō ʿōmedetāʿad :</i> |
| ----- | | | |
| II | C | ⁴ <i>zēker ʿāsāh ləniḥləʿōtāyw ^</i> | <i>ḥannûn wərahûm yhw h :</i> |
| | | ⁵ <i>tereḫ nātan lîrēʿāyw ^</i> | <i>yizkōr ləʿōlām bərîṭō :</i> |

X	⁶ <i>kōaḥ maʿāsāyw higgîd</i> [<i>ləʿammō ^</i> <i>lātēt</i>] <i>lāhem †</i> <i>naḥālat gōyîm :</i>
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- | | | | |
|-------|----|---------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------|
| | C' | ⁷ <i>maʿāsê yādāyw ʿemet ūmišpāt ^</i> | <i>neʿmānîm kol piqqûdāyw :</i> |
| | | ⁸ <i>səmûkîm lāʿad ləʿōlām ^</i> | <i>ʿāsûyîm beʿemet wəyāšār :</i> |
| ----- | | | |
| III | B' | ⁹ <i>pəḏût šālāh ləʿammō †</i> | <i>šiwwāh ləʿōlām bərîṭō ^</i> |
| | | <i>qāḏōš wənôrāʿ šəmō :</i> | ¹⁰ <i>rēʿîṭ ḥokmāh yirʿat yhw h †</i> |
| | A' | <i>sēkel ṭōḫ ləkol ʿōsêhem ^</i> | <i>təhillātō ʿōmedet lāʿad :</i> |

7. The 23 **briques** (primary SAS units) are distributed in 5 **strophes** in Psalm 111 as follows: **23** = (2 + 4) + (4 + 3 + 4) + (4 + 2) = 6 + 11 + 6; or **17 // 17** with the central pivot included in each half.

The **arithmological center** of Psalm 111 falls between the words *lə'ammô lātēt* (“his people / giving”) in the middle of v. 6, with 37 words on either side. Psalm 111 has 42 SAS units, 23 **briques** (primary SAS units), 11 versets, 7 strophes and 3 cantos. The **arithmological center** in v. 6 is in the middle canto, the middle strophe, the middle verset, immediately before the beginning of the middle **brique**, and between the two middle SAS units. There are 280 morae in Psalm 111—with 141 morae before the **arithmological center** and 139 morae after it. The center of Psalm 111 falls in the middle of the 11th verset, which divides the alphabetical acrostic in half, with 11 letters of the alphabet on either side.

8. Terrien finds two main sections (**cantos**) subdivided in 4 four parts (**strophes**) in Psalm 111 (*The Psalms* [Eerdmans, 2003], p. 755.) 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** arranged in 3 cantos (vv. 1–3, 4–8 and 9–10).

Christensen	Terrien
I A 111:1	I 1 111:1–3
B 111:2–3	
II C 111:4–5	2 111:4–5
X 111:6	
C' 111:7–8	II 3 111:6–8
III B' 111:9–10a	4 111:9–10
A' 111:10bc	

The difference in terms of strophic structure results from the fact that Terrien does not locate the **meaningful center** and does not observe the symmetrical inverse structural pattern of Psalm 111 as a whole.

9. {Add section discussing alphabetic acrostics in the Psalter—in light of David Noel Freedman’s work}
10. Determining the details of the musical and literary structures of Psalm 111 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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