

Psalm 113:1–9

Translation, Logoprosodic Analysis, and Observations

Hallelujah Psalm: the Name of YHWH be Praised

Ps 113:1–9

A. *Hallelu-Yah—Praise the Name of YHWH* (113:1)

[3.2]

113:1 Praise Yah! (*Hallelujah*) /

	<u>6 1</u>	<u>2 2 0</u>
112:6–113:1a		44 26 18

Praise / O servants of YHWH //

	<u>11 2</u>	<u>3 3 0</u>
112:9–113:1b		23 17 6

Praise / the name of YHWH //

	<u>11 2</u>	<u>4 0 4</u>
112:9–113:1		27 17 10

B. *May the Name of YHWH be Praised at All Times Forever* (113:2–3)

[4.4]

113:2 Let the name of YHWH /^a be praised //
from now on /

	14 2	4 4 0
	<u>5 1</u>	<u>1 0 1</u>
112:10–113:2b		23 15 8

And forevermore //

	<u>6 1</u>	<u>2 0 2</u>
112:9–113:2		34 21 13

113:3 From sunrise /^a to its setting //
may it be praised / the name of YHWH //

	11 2	4 4 0
	<u>10 2</u>	<u>3 0 3</u>
113:1–3		23 13 10

C. *YHWH Is High Over All the Nations—Who Is Like YHWH Our God?* (113:4–5)

[4.4]

113:4 High over all the nations / is YHWH //
above the heavens /^a is his glory //

	11 2	5 5 0
	<u>11 2</u>	<u>3 0 3</u>
112:8–113:4		57 34 23

113:5 Who / is like YHWH our God //
the one who is enthroned /^a on high? //

	13 2	3 3 0
	<u>11 2</u>	<u>2 0 2</u>
112:8–113:3		78 45 33

D. *YHWH Raises the Poor from the Dust and Seats Them with Nobles* (113:6–8)

[4.4]

113:6 The one who stoops to look //
from heaven to earth //

	9 1	2 2 0
	<u>12 1</u>	<u>2 0 2</u>
113:4–6		17 10 7

113:7	Who raises from the dust / ^a the poor //	$\begin{array}{r} _13 \ 2_ \\ \hline \end{array}$	$\begin{array}{r} \ 3 \ 3 \ 0 \\ \hline 27 \ 17 \ 10 \end{array}$
	From the dunghill / he lifts up the needy //	$\begin{array}{r} _12 \ 2_ \\ \hline \end{array}$	$\begin{array}{r} \ 3 \ 0 \ 3 \\ \hline 23 \ 13 \ 10 \end{array}$
113:8	In order to seat him with nobles //	$\begin{array}{r} 13 \ 1 \\ \hline \end{array}$	$\begin{array}{r} 3 \ 3 \ 0 \\ \hline \end{array}$
	with ^a the nobles of his (own) people //	$\begin{array}{r} \ 9 \ 2 \\ \hline \end{array}$	$\begin{array}{r} \ 3 \ 0 \ 3 \\ \hline 52 \ 29 \ 23 \end{array}$

E. As a Joyful Mother of Children, Praise Yah! (113:9) [2.3]

113:9	Who provide / for the barren one a family /	$\begin{array}{r} _12 \ 2_ \\ \hline \end{array}$	$\begin{array}{r} \ 3 \ 3 \ 0 \\ \hline 55 \ 32 \ 23 \end{array}$
	As a joyful mother / ^a of children //	$\begin{array}{r} \ 12 \ 2 \\ \hline \end{array}$	$\begin{array}{r} \ 3 \ 3 \ 0 \\ \hline 27 \ 17 \ 10 \end{array}$
	Praise Yah! (<i>Hallelujah</i>) ^a //	$\begin{array}{r} \ 6 \ 1 \\ \hline \end{array}$	$\begin{array}{r} \ 2 \ 2 \ 0 \\ \hline 60 \ 37 \ 23 \end{array}$

Scansion in SAS Units: (3.2).(4.4) . (4.4) . (4.4).(2.3) = 13 + 8 + 13 = **34**

Concentric Compositional Formula: 60 = 30 + 0 + 30 [word count]

Notes:

113:4^a Reading the sequence of *tarḥâ* followed by *mûnaḥ* in BHS as disjunctive.

113:5^a Reading a disjunctive, BHS has *gaʿyâ* (= *meteg*) in addition to *mêrakâ*.

113:8^a Reading the *rəḥîaʿ muḡraš* here in BHS as conjunctive, with much hesitation.

113:9^a Reading a disjunctive, BHS has *gaʿyâ* (= *meteg*) in addition to *mêrakâ*.

113:9^b Letteris and Ginsburg read “Hallelujah” as a single word here.

Summary of the Logoprosodic Analysis

1. Psalm 113 has five strophes: 113:1, 2–3, 4–5, 6–8 and 9.

A	113:1a	{the 2-word rubric “Hallelu-Yah” stands outside the prosodic structure of the psalm}		
	113:bc	balanced dyad	[11 + 11]	= 11 + 11 morae
B	113:2–3	2 balanced dyads + pivot:	[14 + 5] + 6 + [11 + 10]	= 19 + 6 + 21 morae
X	113:4–5	2 balanced dyads:	[11 + 11] + [13 + 11]	= 22 + 24 morae
B'	113:6–8	balanced triad:	[9 + 12 + 13] + [12 + 13 + 9]	= 34 + 34 morae
A'	113:9ab	2 balanced dyads:	[12 + 12]	= 12 + 12 morae
	113:9c	{the 2-word rubric “Hallelu-Yah” stands outside the prosodic structure of the psalm}		

1. The first strophe (113:1) has two parts arranged in three subdivisions on the basis of word-count: 113:1a (2-word prelude), 1b and 1c.

- 112:9–113:1 **17** words before *atnach*
2. The second strophe (113:2–3) is a single part arranged in three subdivisions on the basis of word-count: 113:2ab, 2c and 3.
 - 112:9–113:2 **34** (= 2x17) words
 - 113:1–3 **23** words
 3. The third strophe (113:4–5) is a single part arranged in two subdivisions on the basis of word-count: 3:4 and 5.
 - 112:8–113:4 **34** (= 2x17) words before and **23** words after *atnach*
 - 112:8–113:5 **78** (= **26** x 3) words
 4. The fourth strophe (113:6–8) is a single part arranged in two subdivisions on the basis of word-count: 3:4 and 5.
 - 113:4–6 **17** words
 - 113:4–7 **23** words
 - 113:1–8 **52** (= **26** x 2) words and **23** words after *atnach*
 5. The fifth strophe (113:9) has two parts: 113:9a, 9b and 9c
 - 113:1–9a **55 = 32 + 23** [compositional formula]
 - 113:1–9 **23** words before *atnach*

Observations

1. The content of the eight verses in the three strophes in Psalm 113 may be outlined in a menorah pattern, which is determined primarily on prosodic grounds, as follows:

A	Hallelu-Yah—Praise the Name of YHWH	[3.2] 113:1
B	Let the name of YHWH be praised now and evermore	[2.2] 113:2
C	May the name of YHWH be praised all day long	[2.2] 113:3
X	YHWH is high over all the nations—he is incomparable	[4.4] 113:4–5
C'	YHWH looks down and raises the poor from the dust	[2.2] 113:6–7a
B'	He seats them with the nobles of their own people	[2.2] 113:7b–8
A'	As a joyful mother of children, praise Yah (Hallelu-Yah)!	[2.3] 113:9
2. In terms of the 60 words in Psalm 113, the **arithmological center** falls between the two words **הַשָּׁמַיִם כְּבוֹדוֹ** (“the heavens are like his glory”) in 113:4b. The initial concentric compositional formula is:

$$60 = 30 + 0 + 30 \quad \text{[word count—with prelude and postlude]}$$

If the two words in the center of Psalm 113 are taken as the **meaningful center**, the concentric compositional formula is:

$$60 = 29 + 2 + 29 \quad \text{[word count—with prelude and postlude]}$$

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

על כל גוים יהוה Over all the nations is YHWH;
 על השמים כבודו Above the heavens is his glory.
 מי כיהוה אלהינו Who is like YHWH our God,
 המגביהי לשבת The one who is enthroned on high?

The corresponding compositional formula then becomes:

$$60 = 24 + 12 + 24 \quad [\text{word count—with prelude and postlude}]$$

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

3 ממזרח שמש עד מבוא From sunrise to its setting
 מהלל שם יהוה May the name of YHWH be praised.
 4 רם על כל גוים יהוה High over all the nations is YHWH;
 על השמים כבודו Above the heavens is his glory.
 5 מי כיהוה אלהינו Who is like YHWH our God,
 המגביהי לשבת The one who is enthroned on high?
 6 המשפילי לראות The one who stoops to look
 בשמים ובארץ From heaven to earth
 7 מקימי מעפר דל מאשפת Who raises the poor from the dust, from the dunghill.

The corresponding compositional formula then becomes:

$$60 = 16 + 28 + 16 \quad [\text{word count—with prelude and postlude}]$$

3. The 16-word “nested framework” (with the 5-word framework underlined) reads as follows:

1 הללו יה Praise Yah!
 הללו עבדי יהוה Praise, O servants of YHWH.
 הללו את־שם יהוה Praise the name of YHWH.
 2 יהי שם יהוה מברך Let the name of YHWH be praised.
 מעתה ועד־עולם From now on and forevermore.
 ירים אביון He lifts up the needy,
 8 להושיבי עם־נדיבים In order to seat him with nobles,
 עם נדיבי עמו With nobles of his (own) people.
 9 מושיבי עקרת הבית Who provide for the barren one a family,
 אם־הבנים שמחת As a joyful mother of children.
 הללויה Praise Yah!

4. Summary of the concentric compositional formulae:

60 = 29 + 2 + 29 word-count

60 = 24 + 12 + 24

{with others in between}

60 = 13 + 34 + 13

60 = 5 + 50 + 5

34 = 13 + 8 + 13 SAS (syntactic accentual-stress) units

{34 = 17 x 2

22 = 9 + 4 + 9 **briques** (primary SAS units)

5. In the prosodic structure of Psalm 113, 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 113 has 22 **briques** (primary SAS units), of which 17 are marked by *soph pasuq* (9 times, at the end of each verse), *atnach* (8 times, in each verse except for v. 9). The boundaries of the remaining five **briques** are marked by: *rəḥîa*^c (2 times, v. 9 [twice]), *rəḥîa*^c *muğraš* (vv. 2 and 3), and ^ʾ*azlâ læğarmeh* (v. 1).

6. The prosodic structure of Psalm 113, 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	¹ <i>haləlû yāh</i> †	<i>haləlû ʿabḏê yhw</i> ^	<i>haləlû ʾeṯ šēm yhw</i> :
	B	² <i>yəḥî šēm yhw məḥōrāk</i> ^	<i>mēʿattāh</i> †	
		<i>wəʿaḏ ʿōlām</i> :	³ <i>mimmizrah šemes ʿaḏ məḥô</i> ^	
		<i>məhullāl</i> †	<i>šēm yhw</i> :	

II X ⁴ *rām ʿal kol gôyîm yhw̄h* ^
⁵ *mî ka-yhw̄h ʾēlôhênû* ^

ʿal *haššāmayim kəbôdô* :
hammaġbînû lāšābet :

III B' ⁶ *hammašəpîlî lirʾôṭ* ^
⁷ *məqîmî mēʿāpār dāl* ^
⁸ *ləhôšîbî ʿim nədîbîm* ^

baššāmayim ûḥāʾāreš :
mēʾašpōṭ yārîm ʿebyôn :
ʿim nədîbê ʿammô :

A' ⁹ *môšîbî ʿaqeret habbayîṭ* † *ʿēm habbānîm* † *šəməḥāh haləlû yāh* :

7. The 22 **briques** (primary SAS units) are distributed in 3 **strophes** in Psalm 113 as follows:
 22 = (3 + 6) + 4 + (6 + 3) = 9 + 4 + 9.

The **arithmological center** of Psalm 113 falls between the words *haššāmayim kəbôdô* (“the heavens are like his glory”) in the second half of v. 4, with 30 words on either side. Psalm 113 has **34** SAS units, 22 **briques** (primary SAS units), 10 **versets**, 5 **strophes** and 3 **cantos**. The **arithmological center** in v. 6 is in the middle **strophe**, the middle two **versets**, the middle two **briques**, and at the very beginning of the middle two SAS units.

8. Terrien finds two strophes in Psalm 113 (*The Psalms* [2003], pp. 762–63.) 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 five strophes arranged in three cantos (vv. 1–3, 4–5, and 6–9).

Christensen	Terrien
I A 113:1	I 1 113:1–3
B 113:2–3	
II X 113:4–5	2 113:4–5
III B' 113:6–8a	II 3 113:6–7
A' 113:8b–9	4 113:8–9

The difference in terms of strophic structure in our respective analyses results from the fact that Terrien does not locate the **meaningful center** and does not observe the symmetrical inverse structural pattern of Psalm 113 as a whole.

9. The evidence from the logoprosodic analysis supports the inclusion of the two-word heading as an integral part of Psalm 113 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:

113:1–3 **23** words
 113:1–6 40 words before *atnach*
 113:1–7 **46** (= **23** x 2) words
 113:1–8 **52** (= **26** x 2) words

It is not possible to utilize any of the four compositional numbers (**17**, **23**, **26** and **32**) until the end of verse 3, which leaves seven possible boundaries to work with. In 3 out of 7 of these boundaries (or more than 42% of the time) a multiple of one of these four compositional

numbers is present. If the number **40** is included the percentage increases to more than 57%.

10. If Book 2 (Psalms 42–72) was added to an original Deuteronomiac Psalter to form the Pentateuchal Psalter as we now have it that numbered **119** (= **17 x 7**) psalms, then Psalm 113 was originally Psalm 82 (113 less 31).

11. Determining the details of the musical and literary structures of Psalm 113 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:

- Auffret, P. "Hymne à l'incomparable: Étude structurale du Psaume 113." *SEL* 9 (1992) 35–52.
- Becker, J. "Einige Hyperbata im Alten Testament." *BZ* 17 (1973) 257–63.
- Craigie, P. C. "Psalm 113." *Int* 39 (1985) 70–74.
- Crüsemann, F. *Studien zur Formgeschichte von Hymnus and Danklied in Israel*. WMANT 32 (Neukirchen, 1969) 134ff.
- Freedman, D. N. "Psalm 113 and the Song of Hannah." In *Pottery, Poetry, and Prophecy: Studies in Early Hebrew Poetry* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1980) 243–61 [= *Erlsr* 14 (1975) 56–70].
- Graber, P. L. "The Structural Meaning of Psalm 113." *OPTAT* 4 (1990) 340–52.
- Grether, O. *Name und Wort Gottes im Alten Testament*. BZAW 64 (Giessen, 1934).
- Hurvitz, A. "Originals and Imitations in Biblical Poetry: A Comparative Examination of 1 Sam 2:1–10 and Ps 113:5–9." In *Biblical and Related Studies*, FS S. Iwry, ed. A. Kort and S. Morschauser (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1985) 115–21.
- Jeremias, J. *The Eucharistic Words of Jesus*, 2nd edition, tr. N. Perrin (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1977).
- Knopf, L. "[*môš'bibî*] vocem cum [*šûb*] 'werden' conjungit: Der die Unfruchtbare der Familie zur frohen Mutter von Kindern werden lässt." *VT* 9 (1959).
- Labuschagne, C. J. *The Incomparability of Yahweh in the Old Testament*. POS 5 (Leiden: Brill, 1966).
- Loader, J. A. "A Structural Analysis of Psalm 113." *OTWSA* 19 (1977) 64–68.
- McCann, Clinton, Jr. *A Theological Introduction to the Book of Psalms* (Nashville, 1993) 79–82.
- Riesener, I. *Der Stamm עבר im AT*.
- Slotki, I. W. "Omnipresence, Condescension and Omniscience in Psalm 113,5–6." *JTS* 32 (1931) 367–70.
- Willis, J. T. "The Song of Hannah and Ps 113." *CBQ* 35 (1973) 139–54.

© 2005
Dr. D.L. Christensen Professor of Old Testament
845 Bodega Way Languages and Literature (retired),
Rodeo, California 94572 Graduate Theological Union
+1 510 799 0858 Berkeley, California
dlc @ bibal.net