

Psalm 116:1–19

Translation, Logoprosodic Analysis, and Observations

YHWH Saved Me from Death

Psalm 116:1–19

A. Declaration: I Love YHWH for He Has Heard Me in My Distress (116:1–3) [7.6]

116:1	I love ^a YHWH / for he has heard //	13	2	4	4	0
	the voice / of my supplication //	<u>11</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>3</u>
		115:17–116:1		23	16	7
116:2	For he has inclined his ear / ^a to me //	10	2	4	4	0
	and so all my days I will proclaim //	<u>9</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>2</u>
		115:16–116:2		36	23	13
116:3	The cords of death / have encompassed me //	13	2	3	3	0
	and the Angst of the grave / has seized me //	17	2	3	3	0
	I encountered / ^a distress and sorrow //	<u>12</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>3</u>
		115:17–116:3		38	26	12

B. I Called on the Name of YHWH and he Saved Me (116:4–6) [6.4]

116:4	And on the name of YHWH / ^a I called //	12	2	3	3	0
	O YHWH / save my life //	<u>14</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>4</u>
		116:1–4		29	17	12
116:5	Merciful is YHWH / ^a and righteous //	<u>11</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>0</u>
		116:1–5a		32	20	12
	And our God is full of compassion	<u>12</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>2</u>
		116:1–5		34	20	14
116:6	The caretaker of simple folk is YHWH //	13	1	3	3	0
	I was brought low / but he saved me //	<u>14</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>3</u>
		116:1–6		40	23	17

C. O My Soul, Return to Your Rest— YHWH Rescued Me from Death (116:7–8) [4.4]

116:7	Return, O my soul / to your quietude //	15	2	3	3	0
	for YHWH / has dealt bountifully with you //	<u>16</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>4</u>
		116:1–7		47	26	21
116:8	For you rescued my soul / from death //	13	2	4	4	0
	my eye from tears //	9	1	4	4	0
	(and) my foot from stumbling //	<u>8</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>3</u>
		116:1–8		58	34	24

D. I Walk in YHWH's Presence in Faith in Spite of My Anguish (116:9–11) [4.4.4]

116:9	I shall walk / in the presence of YHWH //	<u>11 2</u>	<u>3 3 0</u>
		116:6–9a	27 17 10
	In the lands / of the living //	<u>9 2</u>	<u>2 0 2</u>
		116:1–9	63 37 26
116:10	I had faith / when I said //	11 2	3 3 0
	I indeed / am suffering acutely //	<u>12 2</u>	<u>3 0 3</u>
		116:5–10	40 23 17
116:11	When I said / in my anguish //	12 2	3 3 0
	every human being / ^a is unreliable //	<u>11 2</u>	<u>3 0 3</u>
		116:1–11	75 43 32

E. To Repay YHWH I Lift up the Cup of Salvation and Pay My Vows (116:12–14) [4.4]

116:12	How can I repay YHWH //	11 1	3 3 0
	for all his bounties toward me //	<u>12 1</u>	<u>3 0 3</u>
		116:1–12	81 46 35
116:13	The cup of salvation / I will lift up //	<u>10 2</u>	<u>3 3 0</u>
		116:9–13a	26 15 11
	and on the name of YHWH I will call //	<u>12 1</u>	<u>3 0 3</u>
		116:8–13	40 23 17
116:14	My vows ^a to YHWH I will pay //	13 1	3 3 0
	in full view / of all his people //	<u>10 2</u>	<u>4 0 4</u>
		116:1–14	94 52 42

F. The Death of Those Who Love YHWH Is Costly in His Eyes (116:15–16) [4.6]

116:15	Costly / in the eyes of YHWH //	13 2	3 3 0
	is the death / of those who love him //	<u>12 2</u>	<u>2 0 2</u>
		116:7–15	59 32 27
116:16	O YHWH / I am indeed / ^a your servant //	<u>16 2</u>	<u>5 5 0</u>
		116:14–16a	17 11 6
	I am your servant / the son of your handmaid //	12 2	4 4 0
	you have loosed / my bonds //	<u>11 2</u>	<u>2 0 2</u>
		116:1–16	110 64 46

G. I Will Pay My Vows in the Midst of You, O Jerusalem (116:17–19) [6.7]

116:17	To you I offer / a sacrifice of thanksgiving //	<u> 10 2 </u>	<u> 4 4 0 </u>
		116:11–17a	45 28 17
	And on the name of YHWH / ^a I call //	<u> 12 2 </u>	<u> 3 0 3 </u>
		116:15–17	23 16 7
116:18	My vows to YHWH / I will pay //	<u> 12 2 </u>	<u> 3 3 0 </u>
		116:15–18a	26 19 7
	May it be in full view / of all his people //	<u> 10 2 </u>	<u> 4 0 4 </u>
		116:10–18	61 34 27
116:19	In the courts / of the house of YHWH /	<u> 11 2 </u>	<u> 3 3 0 </u>
		116:17–19A	17 10 7
	In the midst of you / ^a O Jerusalem /	15 2	2 2 0
	praise Yah //	<u> 6 1 </u>	<u> 2 2 0 </u>
		116:1–19	131 78 53

Scansion in Accentual Stress Units: [(7.6).(6.4)] . [(4.4).(4.4.4).(4.4)] . [(4.6).(6.7)]
 = (13 + 10) + (8 + 12 + 8) + (10 + 13) = **23 + 28 + 23 = 74**
{51 = 17 x 3}

Concentric Compositional Formula: 131 = 67 + 1 + 67 [word count—with heading]

Notes:

- 116:1^a Reading *dəḥî* here in BHS as conjunctive.
- 116:2^a Reading the second of two successive occurrences of *munaḥ* plus *ga'yā* (= *meteg*) in BHS as disjunctive.
- 116:3^a Reading the sequence of *tarḥā* followed by *munaḥ* here as disjunctive.
- 116:4^a Reading *mērəkā* preceded immediately by *ga'yā* (= *meteg*) in BHS as disjunctive.
- 116:5^a Reading the second of two successive occurrences of *munaḥ* here as disjunctive.
- 116:11^a Reading *mērəkā* preceded immediately by *ga'yā* (= *meteg*) in BHS as disjunctive.
- 116:14^a Reading *dəḥî* here in BHS as conjunctive.
- 116:16^a Reading *munaḥ* preceded immediately by *ga'yā* (= *meteg*) in BHS as disjunctive.
- 116:17^a Reading the sequence of *tarḥā* followed by *munaḥ* here as disjunctive.
- 116:19^a Reading *šinnorit* plus *mērəkā* followed immediately by *ga'yā* (= *meteg*) in BHS as disjunctive.

Summary of the Logoprosodic Analysis

1. Psalm 116:1–19 has seven strophes: 116:1–3, 4–6, 7–8, 9–11, 12–14, 15–16 and 17–19.

A	116:1–3	2 dyads & triad:	$[(13 + 11) + (10 + 9)] + [13 + 17 + 12]$	= 43 + 42	morae
B	116:4–6	2 balanced triads:	$[12 + 14 + 11] + [12 + 13 + 14]$	= 37 + 39	morae
C	116:7–8	2 balanced dyads:	$[15 + 16] + [13 + (9 + 8)]$	= 31 + 30	morae

X	116:9	balanced dyad:	$[11 + 9]$	= 11 + 9	morae
	116:10–11	2 balanced dyads:	$[11 + 12] + [12 + 11]$	= 23 + 23	morae

C'	116:12–14	2 balanced triads:	$[11 + 12 + 10] + [12 + 13 + 10]$	= 33 + 35	morae
B'	116:15–16	2 balanced dyads + pivot:	$[13 + 12] + 16 + [12 + 11]$	= 25 + 16 + 23	morae
A'	116:17–19	2 balanced triads + pivot:	$[10 + 12 + 12] + 10 + [11 + 15 + 6]$	= 34 + 10 + 32	morae

2. The first strophe (116:1–3) is a single part arranged in three subdivisions: 116:1, 2 and 3.

- 116:1–2 **23** words
- 116:2–3 **23** words before *atnach*
- 116:1–3 **26** words before *atnach*

3. The second strophe (116:4–6) has two parts arranged in three subdivisions: 116:4, 5 and 6.

- 116:4–5 **17** words before *atnach*
- 116:5–6 **34** (= **17** x 2) words
- 116:4–6 **40 = 23 + 17** [compositional formula]

4. The third strophe (116:7–8) is a single part arranged in two subdivisions: 116:7 and 8.

- 116:7–8 **34** (= **17** x 2) words
- 116:7 **26** words before *atnach*
- 116:8 **17** words before *atnach*
- 116:7–8 **26** words before *atnach*

5. The fourth strophe (116:9–11) has two parts arranged in four subdivisions: 116:9a, 9b, 10 and 11.

- 116:9a **23** words
- 116:9b **17** words before *atnach*
- 116:10 **23** words before *atnach*
- 116:11 **26** words after *atnach*
- 116:9a–10 **17** words before *atnach*
- 116:9b–10 **40 = 23 + 17** [compositional formula]
- 116:10–11 **26** words before *atnach*
- 116:9a–11 **32** words before *atnach*
- 116:9b–11 **17** words
- 116:10–11 **17** words before *atnach*
- 116:9a–11 **23** words before *atnach*

- 116:5–11 **26** words before *atnach*
 - 116:1–11 **32** words after *atnach*
6. The fifth strophe (116:12–14) is a single part arranged in four subdivisions: 116:12, 13a, 13b and 14.
- 116:9–12 **23** words
 - 116:7–12 **23** words before *atnach*
 - 116:6–12 **26** words before *atnach*
 - 116:5–12 **23** words after *atnach*
 - 116:4–12 **32** words before *atnach*
 - 116:2–12 **32** words after *atnach*
 - 116:9–13a **26** words
 - 116:8–13 **40 = 23 + 17** [compositional formula]
 - 116:7–13 **26** words before *atnach*
 - 116:5–13 **32** words before *atnach*
 - 116:8–14 **26** words before *atnach*
 - 116:6–14 **32** words before *atnach*
7. The sixth strophe (116:15–16) is a single part arranged in three subdivisions: 116:15, 16a and 16b.
- 116:8–15 **52** (= **26** x 2) words and **23** words after *atnach*
 - 116:7–15 **32** words before *atnach*
 - 116:14–16 **23** words
 - 116:12–16 **17** words after *atnach*
 - 116:10–16 **23** words after *atnach*
 - 116:9–16 **26** words after *atnach*
 - 116:5–16 **32** words after *atnach*
8. The seventh strophe (116:17–19) has two parts arranged in three subdivisions: 116:16, 17 and 18.
- 116:15–17 **23** words
 - 116:12–17 **17** words after *atnach*
 - 116:10–17 **23** words after *atnach*
 - 116:10–18 **34** (= **17** x 2) words before *atnach*
 - 116:8–18 **32** words after *atnach*
 - 116:16–19 **32** words

Observations

1. The seven strophes in Psalm 116 may be outlined in a menorah pattern, which is determined primarily on prosodic grounds, as follows:

A	Declaration: I love YHWH for he has heard me in my distress	[7.6]	116:1–3
B	I called on the name of YHWH and he saved me	[6.4]	116:4–6
C	O my soul, return to your rest— YHWH rescued me from death	[4.4]	116:7–8
X	I walk in YHWH's presence in faith in spite of my anguish	[4.4.4]	116:9–11
C'	To repay YHWH I lift up the cup of salvation and I pay my vows	[4.4]	116:12–14
B'	The death of those who love YHWH is costly in his eyes	[4.6]	116:15–16
A'	Declaration: I will pay my vows in the midst of you, O Jerusalem	[6.7]	116:17–19

2. In terms of the 131 words in Psalm 116, the **arithmological center** falls on the word **אֲדַבֵּר** (“I will say”) in 116:10a with 65 words on either side. The initial **concentric compositional formula** is:

$$131 = 65 + 1 + 65 \quad [\text{word count—with heading}]$$

A **meaningful center** is found by including two words on either side of the **arithmological center**, as follow:

אֲדַבֵּר	הֵאֱמַנְתִּי כִּי	I believed when I said:
	אֲנִי עֲנִיתִי	I indeed am afflicted.

In this instance, the *Concentric Compositional Formula* becomes:

$$131 = 63 + 5 + 63 \quad [\text{word count—with 2-word heading}]$$

The **meaningful center** may be expanded to include 18 words on either side of the **arithmological center**, which comprises 116:7–12a. When these 37 words are read as part of each half of Psalm 116, the *Concentric Compositional Formula* becomes:

$$131 = 47 + 37 + 47 \quad [\text{word count—with 2-word heading}]$$

3. The 14-word “nested framework” (with the 7-word framework underlined) reads as follows:

1	<u>אֶהְבֵּתִי כִּי־יִשְׁמַע יְהוָה</u>	<u>I love YHWH for he has heard</u>
	<u>אֶת־קוֹלִי תַחֲנוּנֵי</u>	<u>the voice of my supplication.</u>
2	כִּי־הִטָּה אָזְנוֹ לִי	For he has inclined his ear to me.
	וּבִימֵי אֶקְרָא	And all my days I will proclaim:
3	אֶפְפוּנִי	“They have encompassed me!”
18	נִדְרֵי לַיהוָה אֶשְׁלֵם	My vows to YHWH I will repay;
	נִגְדָה־נָּא לְכָל־עַמּוֹ	May it be in full view of all his people—

<u>בחצרות בית יהוה</u>	<u>In the courts of the house of YHWH,</u>
<u>בתוככי ירושלם</u>	<u>In the midst of you, O Jerusalem;</u>
<u>הללויה</u>	<u>Praise Yah (Hallelu-Yah).</u>

4. Summary of the concentric compositional formulae:

$$131 = 63 + 5 + 63$$

$$131 = 47 + 37 + 47$$

{with others in between}

$$131 = 14 + 103 + 14$$

$$131 = 7 + 117 + 7$$

$$74 = 23 + 28 + 23 \quad \text{SAS units}$$

$$\{51 = 17 \times 3\}$$

$$46 = 14 + 18 + 14 \quad \text{briques (primary SAS units)}$$

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

5. In the prosodic structure of Psalm 116, 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*.
- **Oleh 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 with the translation (above), the presence of these three primary disjunctive markers is indicated with a double slash (/). Psalm 116 has 46 **briques** (primary SAS units), 39 of which are marked by *soph pasuq* (19 times, at the end of each verse), *atnach* (18 times, in each verse, except v. 19), and *oleh weyored* (2 times, in vv. 8 and 16). The boundaries of the remaining seven **briques** are marked by *revia* (3 times, in vv. 3 and 19 [twice]), *revia mugrash* (2 times, in vv. 4 and 7), *šinnor* (v. 16), and *dehî* (v. 16).

6. The prosodic structure of Psalm 116, in terms of its **briques** (primary syntactic accentual-stress units), may be displayed as follows: ^ represents *atnach*; : represents *soph pasuq*; † represents *oleh weyored*; and † represents all other accent markers.

I A ¹ ʾāhabtî kî yišma^c yhwh ^ ʾet qôlî taḥănûnāy :
² kî hiṭṭāh ʾoznô lî ^ ûb̄əyāmay ʾeqrāʾ :
³ ʾāpāpûnî heblê māwet† ûməšārê šəʾôl məšāûnî ^ šārāh wəyāgôn ʾemšāʾ :

B ⁴ ûb̄əšēm yhwh ʾeqrāʾ ^ ʾānnāh yhwh † malləṭāh nap̄šî :
⁵ ḥannûn yhwh wəšaddîq ^ wēʾlôhênû mərəḥēm :
⁶ šômēr pəṭāʾîm yhwh ^ dallôṭî wəlî yəhōšîa^c :

II C ⁷ šûbî nap̄šî limnûḥāyəkî ^ kî yhwh † gāmal ʿālāyəkî :
⁸ kî ḥillaštā nap̄šî mimmāwet† ʾet ʿênî min dimʿāh ^
 ʾet raḡlî middeḥî :

X ⁹ ʾethallək̄ lipnê yhwh ^ bəʾaršôṭ haḥḥayyîm :
¹⁰ heʾēmantî kî ʾăḏabbēr ^ ʾānî ʿānîṭî məʾôḏ :
¹¹ ʾānî ʾāmartî bəḥop̄zî ^ kol hāʾādām kōzēb :

C' ¹² māh ʾāšîb la-yhwh ^ kol taḡmûlôhî ʿālāy :
¹³ kôs yəšûʿôṭ ʾeššāʾ ^ ûb̄əšēm yhwh ʾeqrāʾ :
¹⁴ nəḏāray la-yhwh ʾāšallēm ^ neḡḏāh nāʾ lək̄ol ʿammô :

III B' ¹⁵ yāqār bəʿênê yhwh ^ hammāwəṭāh laḥsîḏāyāw :
¹⁶ ʾānnāh yhwh † kî ʾānî ʿabdekā †
 ʾānî ʿabdekā † ben ʾāmāteqā ^ pittaḥtā ləməšērāy :

A' ¹⁷ lək̄ā ʾezbaḥ zəbaḥ tôḏāh ^ ûb̄əšēm yhwh ʾeqrāʾ :
¹⁸ nəḏāray la-yhwh ʾāšallēm ^ neḡḏāh nāʾ lək̄ol ʿammô :
¹⁹ bəḥašrôṭ bêt yhwh † bəṭôkēkî yərûšālāim † haləlû yāh :

According to the analysis presented here, the 46 **briques** are distributed within 7 strophes in Psalm 116 as follows: **46** = (7 + 7) + (6 + 6 + 6) + (7 + 7) = 14 + 18 + 14.

The **arithmological center** of Psalm 116 falls on the word **ʾăḏabbēr** (“I will say”) in 116:10a, with 65 words on either side. Psalm 116 has 74 SAS units, 46 **briques** (primary SAS units), 19 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 SAS units. There are

497 morae in Psalm 116—with 250 morae before the word **אָדַבֵּר** (“I will say”) in 116:10a and 243 morae after it.

7. Terrien finds 4 strophes in Psalm 116 (*The Psalms* [2003], pp. 775–76), which correspond more or less with the cantos. 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 seven strophes arranged in three cantos (vv 1–6, 7–14 and 15–19).

Christensen	Terrien
I A 116:1–3	I 116:1–5
B 116:4–6	
II C 116:7–8	II 116:6–10
X 116:9–11	
C' 116:12–14	III 116:11–14
III B' 116:15–16	IV 116:15–19
A' 116:17–19	

8. Note the following list of significant compositional numbers at the boundaries of the verses counting from the beginning:

116:1–4 **17** words before *atnach*
 116:1–5 **34** (= **17** x 2) words
 116:1–6 **40** = **23** + **17** [compositional formula]
 116:1–7 **26** words before *atnach*
 116:1–8 **34** (= **17** x 2) words before *atnach*
 116:1–9 **26** words after *atnach*
 116:1–10 **69** (= **23** x 3) words
 116:1–11 **32** words after *atnach*
 116:1–12 **46** (= **23** x 2) words before *atnach*
 116:1–14 **52** (= **26** x 2) words before *atnach*
 116:1–16 **110** = **64** + **46** [compositional formula] = 2 x (**55** = **32** + **23**)
 116:1–17 **68** (= **17** x 4) words before *atnach*
 116:1–19 **78** (= **26** x 3) words before *atnach*

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 18 possible boundaries to work with. In 13 out of 18 of these boundaries (or 72.2% 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 116.

Note also the three occurrences of the same compositional formula:

116:1–6 **40** = **23** + **17** [compositional formula]
 116:5–10 **40** = **23** + **17** [compositional formula]
 116:8–13 **40** = **23** + **17** [compositional formula]

9. The divine-name **YHWH** appears 15 times (plus an additional occurrence at the very end in the abbreviated form “Yah” [in Hallelujah]—five times in each canto, with the middle occurrence (v. 9) in the middle strophe.
10. Note the Aramaic form of the pronominal suffixes in verse 7, which lends credence to Terrien’s dating of Psalm 116 to “close to the reconstruction of Zion at the end of the sixth century” (p. 778).
11. Determining the details of the musical and literary structure of Psalm 116 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:

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