

Psalm 118:1–29

Translation, Logoprosodic Analysis, and Observations

Liturgy for Temple Pilgrims

Psalm 118:1–29

A. Give Thanks to YHWH for He is Good (118:1–2)

[4.4]

118:1 Give thanks to YHWH /^a for he is good // 12 2 4 4 0
for his covenant-love /^b endures forever // 10 2 3 0 3
116:17–118:1 45 32 13

118:2 Let Israel be pleased /^a to say // 10 2 3 3 0
for his covenant-love /^b endures forever // 10 2 3 0 3
116:17–118:2 51 35 16

B. Let Aaron's House Say: "His Covenant-Love Endures Forever" (118:3–4)

[4.4]

118:3 Let the house of Aaron be pleased /^a to say // 13 2 4 4 0
for his covenant-love /^b endures forever // 10 2 3 0 3
116:19–118:3 44 32 12

118:4 Let those who fear YHWH / be pleased to say // 14 2 4 4 0
for his covenant-love /^a endures forever // 10 2 3 0 3
117:2–118:4 38 26 12

C. I Called Out to YHWH and He Set Me Free (118:5)

[2.2]

118:5 From (my) distress / I called to Yah // 13 2 4 4 0
116:15–118:5 85 59 26

Yah answered me /^a with spacious freedom // 12 2 3 0 3
118:1–5 34 19 15

D. YHWH Is for Me; I Have No Fear of Those Who Hate Me (118:6–7)

[4.4]

118:6 YHWH is for me / I will not fear // 12 2 4 4 0
what can any human being do /^a to me // 10 2 4 0 4
118:1–6 42 23 19

118:7 YHWH is for me / among those who help me // 12 2 3 3 0
as for me / I look (boldly) on those who hate me // 12 2 3 0 3
118:1–7 48 26 22

E. YHWH Is a Better Refuge Than Any Human Source of Power (118:8–9)

[4.4]

118:8 (It is) better / to seek refuge in YHWH // 11 2 3 3 0
than to trust / in a human // 11 2 2 0 2

	118:5-8		26	14	12
118:9	(It is) better / to seek refuge in YHWH //	11 2	3	3	0
	than to trust / in princes //	<u>10 2</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>2</u>
	118:1-9		58	32	26

F. With YHWH's Help I Defeated the Nations That Surround Me (118:10-13) [8.8]

118:10	All nations / ^a surrounded me //	12 2	3	3	0
	(it is) in the name of YHWH / that I cut them to pieces //	<u>13 2</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>4</u>
	118:8-10		17	9	8
118:11	They encircled me / ^a indeed they surrounded me //	13 2	3	3	0
	(it is) in the name of YHWH / that I cut them to pieces //	<u>13 2</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>4</u>
	118:5-11		45	23	22
118:12	They encircled me like bees /	<u>10 1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>0</u>
	118:8-12a		26	14	12
	They were extinguished ^a as a fire of brambles //	12 1	3	3	0
	(it is) in the name of YHWH / that I cut them to pieces //	<u>13 2</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>4</u>
	118:10-12		23	11	12
118:13	(They) pushed me violently / ^a to make me fall //	12 2	3	3	0
	and YHWH / ^b came to my help //	<u>12 2</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>2</u>
	118: 9-13		33	17	16

G. YHWH Is My Strength and Song—His Right Hand Acts with Power (118:14-16) [6.6]

118:14	Yah / is my strength and my song //	9 2	3	3	0
	and he has become to me / salvation //	<u>12 2</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>3</u>
	118:10-14		34	17	17
118:15	A cry ^a of triumph and salvation /	11 1	3	3	0
	(is heard) in the tents of the righteous //	<u>10 1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>0</u>
	118:11-15b		32	19	13
	The right (hand) of YHWH / acts with power //	<u>14 2</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>4</u>
	118:11-15		36	19	17
118:16	The right (hand) of YHWH / is exalted //	<u>13 2</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>0</u>
	118:13-16a		23	14	9
	The right (hand) of YHWH / acts with power //	<u>14 2</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>4</u>
	118:12-16		36	19	17

H. *Open the Gates of Righteousness That I May Enter* (118:17–20) [8.8]

118:17	I shall not die / ^a but I will live //	10 2	4 4 0
	and I will tell / of the works of Yah //	<u>11 2</u>	<u>3 0 3</u>
		118:15–17	23 12 11
118:18	Yah / ^a has disciplined me severely //	10 2	3 3 0
	and to death / he has not given me over //	<u>14 2</u>	<u>3 0 3</u>
		118:12–18	49 26 23
118:19	Open to me / ^a the gates of righteousness //	11 2	4 4 0
	I will enter through them / I will give thanks to Yah //	<u>11 2</u>	<u>4 0 4</u>
		118:13–19	48 25 23
118:20	This is the gate / ^a of YHWH //	9 2	3 3 0
	the righteous / will enter through it //	<u>13 2</u>	<u>3 0 3</u>
		118:16–20	34 17 17

I. *A New Cornerstone Has Become the Way of Salvation* (118:21–22) [4.4]

118:21	I will give thanks to you / you have answered me //	13 2	3 3 0
	and you have become to me / salvation //	<u>12 2</u>	<u>3 0 3</u>
		118:18–21	26 13 13
118:22	A stone / which the builders rejected //	12 2	3 3 0
	it has become / the head of the corner //	<u>11 2</u>	<u>3 0 3</u>
		118:19–22	26 13 13

J. *YHWH's Presence is the Miracle of Salvation* (118:23–24) [4.4]

118:23	From YHWH / this came into being //	15 2	4 4 0
	it is now a miracle / ^a in our eyes //	<u>12 2</u>	<u>3 0 3</u>
		118:19–23	33 17 16
118:24	This is the day / YHWH has made //	12 2	4 4 0
	let us rejoice and be glad / ^a in it //	<u>13 2</u>	<u>3 0 3</u>
		118:21–24	26 14 12

K. *Save Us Now YHWH —Give Us Success!* (118:25) [2.2]

118:25	We beseech you YHWH / save us now //	<u>15 2</u>	<u>4 4 0</u>
		118:17–25a	57 32 25
	We beseech you YHWH / give us success now //	<u>14 2</u>	<u>4 0 4</u>
		118:21–25	34 18 16

L. **Blessed are Those Who Come in YHWH's Name for He Is God** (118:26–27) [4.4]

118:26 Blessed is the one who comes \ in the name of YHWH //	14	1	4	4	0
we have blessed you / from the house of YHWH //	_13	2_	3	0	3
	118:19–26		55	29	26

118:27 YHWH is God /	_6	1_	2	2	0
	118:25–27a		17	10	7

And he has given us light //	8	1	2	2	0
bind the festival (sacrifice) with cords //	10	1	3	3	0
as far as the horns / of the altar //	_9	2_	3	0	3
	118:25–27		27	17	10

M. **You are My God—Give Thanks to YHWH for He Is Good** (118:28–29) [4.4]

118:28 You are my God / ^a and I give thanks to you //	12	2	3	3	0
my God / I exalt you //	_10	2_	2	0	2
	118:27–28		17	12	5

118:29 Give thanks to YHWH / ^a for he is good //	13	2	4	4	0
for his covenant-love / ^b endures forever //	_10	2_	3	0	3
	118:23–28		53	32	21
	118:1–29		198	107	91

Scansion in SAS Units:

$$\begin{aligned}
 &(4.4).(4.4).(2.2) . (4.4).(4.4) . (8.8) . (6.6) . (8.8) . (4.4).(4.4) . (2.2).(4.4).(4.4) \\
 &= (8 + 8 + 4) + (8 + 8 + 16) + 12 + (16 + 8 + 8) + (4 + 8 + 8) \\
 &= (20 + 32) + 12 + (32 + 20) = 52 + 12 + 52 = 116
 \end{aligned}$$

Concentric Compositional Formula: 198 = 99 + 0 + 99 [word count—with heading]

Notes:

- 118:2^a Reading the second of two successive occurrences of *munaḥ* here as disjunctive.
- 118:2^b Reading the sequence of *ṭarḥā* followed by *munaḥ* in BHS as disjunctive.
- 118:3^a Reading the sequence of *mêrəkā* preceded immediately by *gaʿyā* (= *meteg*) in BHS as disjunctive.
- 118:3^b Reading the sequence of *ṭarḥā* followed by *munaḥ* in BHS as disjunctive.
- 118:4^a Reading the sequence of *ṭarḥā* followed by *munaḥ* in BHS as disjunctive.
- 118:5^a Reading the sequence of *ṭarḥā* followed by *munaḥ* in BHS as disjunctive.
- 118:6^a Reading the sequence of *ṭarḥā* followed by *munaḥ* in BHS as disjunctive.
- 118:10^a Reading the *ṭarḥā* here in BHS as disjunctive.
- 118:11^a Reading the *ṭarḥā* here in BHS as disjunctive.
- 118:12^a Reading *dəḥî* here in BHS as conjunctive.
- 118:13^a Reading the second of two successive occurrences of *munaḥ* here as disjunctive.
- 118:13^b Reading the sequence of *ṭarḥā* followed by *munaḥ* in BHS as disjunctive.
- 118:15^a Reading *məhuppak ləḡarmēh* here in BHS as conjunctive.
- 118:17^a Reading the sequence of *mêrəkā* preceded immediately by *gaʿyā* (= *meteg*) in BHS as disjunctive.
- 118:18^a Reading the second of two successive occurrences of *munaḥ* here as disjunctive.
- 118:19^a Reading the *mêrəkā* here in BHS as disjunctive.

- 118:20^a Reading the sequence of *mêrākâ* preceded immediately by *ga'yā* (= *meteg*) in BHS as disjunctive.
 118:23^a Reading the sequence of *tarhā* followed by *munah* in BHS as disjunctive.
 118:24^a Reading the sequence of *tarhā* followed by *munah* in BHS as disjunctive.
 118:28^a Reading the second of two successive occurrences of *munah* here as disjunctive.
 118:29^a Reading the second of two successive occurrences of *munah* here as disjunctive.
 118:29^b Reading the sequence of *tarhā* followed by *munah* in BHS as disjunctive.

Summary of the Logoprosodic Analysis

1. Psalm 118:1–19 has 13 strophes: 118:1–2, 3–4, 5, 6–7, 8–9, 10–13, 14–16, 17–20, 21–22, 23–24, 25, 26–27 and 28–29.

A	118:1–2	2 balanced dyads:	[13 + 10] + [12 + 10]	=	23 + 22	morae
B	118:3–4	2 balanced quatrains:	[13 + 10] + [14 + 10]	=	23 + 24	morae
C	118:5	balanced dyad:	[13 + 12]	=	13 + 12	morae
D	118:6–7	2 balanced dyads:	[12 + 10] + [12 + 12]	=	22 + 24	morae
E	118:8–9	2 balanced dyads:	[11 + 11] + [11 + 10]	=	22 + 21	morae
F	118:10–13	2 quatrains + pivot:	[(12+13)+(13+13)]+10+[(12+13)+(12+12)]	=	51 + 10 + 49	morae

X	118:14–15b	2 balanced dyads:	[9 + 12] + [11 + 10]	=	21 + 21	morae
	118:15c–16	balanced triad:	[14 + 13 + 14]	=	14 + 13 + 14	morae

F'	118:17–20	2 balanced quatrains:	[(10+11) + (10+14)] + [(11+11) + (9+13)]	=	45 + 44	morae
E'	118:21–22	2 balanced dyads:	[13 + 12] + [12 + 11]	=	25 + 23	morae
D'	118:23–24	2 balanced dyads:	[15 + 12] + [12 + 13]	=	27 + 25	morae
C'	118:25	balanced dyad:	[15 + 14]	=	15 + 14	morae
B'	118:26–27	dyad & triad + pivot:	[14 + 13] + 6 + [8 + 10 + 9]	=	27 + 6 + 27	morae
A'	118:28–29	2 balanced dyads:	[12 + 10] + [13 + 10]	=	22 + 23	morae

2. The first strophe (118:1–2) is a single part arranged in two subdivisions: 118:1 and 2.
- 116:17–118:1 **32** words before *atnach*
 - 116:17–118:2 **51** (= **17** x 3) words
3. The second strophe (118:3–4) is a single part arranged in two subdivisions: 118:1 and 2.
- 118:1–3 **17** words before *atnach*
4. The third strophe (118:5) is a single part arranged in two subdivisions: 118:5a and 5b.
- 118:1–5 **34** (= **17** x 2) words
5. The fourth strophe (118:6–7) is a single part arranged in two subdivisions: 118:6 and 7.
- 118:1–6 **23** words before *atnach*
 - 118:1–7 **26** words before *atnach*

6. The fifth strophe (118:8–9) is a single part arranged in two subdivisions: 118:8 and 9.
- 118:6–8 **34** (= 17 x 2) words
 - 118:7–9 **26** words
7. The sixth strophe (118:10–13) is a single part arranged in five subdivisions: 118:10, 11, 12a, 12bc and 13.
- 118:8–10 **17** words
 - 118:5–11 **23** words before *atnach*
 - 118:10–12 **23** words
 - 118:8–12 **17** words before *atnach*
 - 118:9–13 **17** words before *atnach*
8. The seventh strophe (118:14–16) has two parts arranged in five subdivisions: 118:14, 15ab, 15c, 16a and 16b.
- 118:10–14 **34 = 17 + 17** [compositional formula]
 - 118:11–15 **17** words after *atnach*
 - 118:12–16 **17** words after *atnach*
9. The eighth strophe (118:17–20) is a single part arranged in four subdivisions: 118:17, 18, 19 and 20.
- 118:15–17 **23** words
 - 118:12–18 **49 = 26 + 23** [compositional formula]
 - 118:13–19 **23** words after *atnach*
 - 118:16–20 **34 = 17 + 17** [compositional formula]
10. The ninth strophe (118:21–22) is a single part arranged in two subdivisions: 118:21 and 22.
- 118:18–21 **26** words
 - 118:19–22 **26** words
11. The tenth strophe (118:23–24) is a single part arranged in two subdivisions: 118:23 and 24.
- 118:18–21 **17** words before *atnach*
 - 118:21–24 **26** words
12. The eleventh strophe (118:25) is a single part arranged in two subdivisions: 118:25a & 25b.
- 118:21–25 **34** (= 17 x 2) words
13. The twelfth strophe (118:26–27) is a single part arranged in three subdivisions: 118:26, 27a and 27b–d
- 118:19–26 **26** words after *atnach*
 - 118:25–27 **17** words before *atnach*
14. The thirteenth strophe (118:28–29) is a single part arranged in two subdivisions: 118:28 and 29.
- 118:27–28 **17** words
 - 118:23–29 **32** words before *atnach*

Observations

- The 13 strophes in Psalm 118 may be outlined in a nested menorah pattern, which is determined primarily on prosodic grounds as follows:

1ST Level Menorah: Liturgy for Temple Pilgrims—Victory in YHWH (118:1–29)

A	Give thanks to YHWH for he is good	[4.4]	118:1–2
B	Let Aaron’s house say: “His covenant-love endures forever!”	[4.4]	118:3–4
C	I called out to YHWH and he set me free	[2.2]	118:5
X	YHWH is my strength and my salvation	—	118:6–24
C’	Save us now, O YHWH, and give us success!	[2.2]	118:25
B’	Blessed are those who come in YHWH’s name for he is God	[4.4]	118:26–27
A’	You are my God—give thanks to YHWH for he is good!	[4.4]	118:28–29

2nd Level: YHWH Is My Strength & Song—His Right Hand Acts with Power (118:6–24)

A	YHWH is for me so I have no fear of those who hate me	[4.4]	118:6–7
B	YHWH is a better refuge than any human source of power	[4.4]	118:8–9
C	With YHWH’s help I defeated the nations that surround me	[8.8]	118:10–13
X	YHWH is my strength and my song	[6.6]	118:14–16
C’	Open the gates of righteousness that I may enter	[8.8]	118:17–20
B’	A new cornerstone has become the way of salvation	[4.4]	118:21–22
A’	YHWH’s presence is the miracle of salvation	[4.4]	118:23–24

- In terms of the 198 words in Psalm 118, the **arithmological center** falls between the words יהוה עשה (“YHWH acts”) in 118:15b with 99 words on either side. The initial **concentric compositional formula**, which constitutes a meaningful center, is:

$$198 = 98 + 2 + 98 \quad [\text{word count—with heading}]$$

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

ימין יהוה עשה חיל The right (hand) of YHWH acts with power;

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

$$198 = 97 + 4 + 97 \quad [\text{word count}]$$

The **meaningful center** may be expanded to include five words on either side of the **arithmological center** as follows:

וישועה באהלי צדיקים And salvation is in the tents of the righteous.
 ימין יהוה עשה חיל The right (hand) of YHWH acts with power;
 ימין יהוה רוממה The right (hand) of YHWH is exalted;

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

$$198 = 94 + 10 + 94 \text{ [word count]}$$

3. The 20-word “nested framework” (with the 7-word framework underlined) reads as follows:

1	<u>הודו ליהוה כי־טוב</u>	<u>Give thanks to YHWH for he is good;</u>
	<u>כי לעולם חסדו</u>	<u>For his covenant-love endures forever.</u>
2	יאמר־נא ישראל	Let Israel be pleased to say:
	כי לעולם חסדו	For his covenant-love endures forever.
3	יאמרו־נא בית־אהרן	Let the house of Aaron be pleased to say:
	כי לעולם חסדו	For his covenant-love endures forever.
	ויאר לנו	And he has given us light.
	אסרו־חג בעבתים	Bind the festival (sacrifice) with cords,
	עד־קרנות המזבח	As far as the horns of the altar.
28	אלי אתה ואודך	You are my God and I give thanks to you;
	אלהי ארוממך	My God, I exalt you.
29	<u>הודו ליהוה כי־טוב</u>	<u>Give thanks to YHWH for he is good;</u>
	<u>כי לעולם חסדו</u>	<u>For his covenant-love endures forever.</u>

4. Summary of the concentric compositional formulae:

$$198 = 98 + 2 + 98$$

$$198 = 97 + 4 + 97$$

$$198 = 94 + 10 + 94$$

{with others in between}

$$198 = 20 + 158 + 20$$

$$198 = 7 + 184 + 7$$

$$116 = 62 + 12 + 62$$

$$58 = 18 + 22 + 18$$

$$\{58 = 26 + 32\}$$

5. In the prosodic structure of Psalm 118, 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 with the translation (above), the presence of these three primary disjunctive markers is indicated with a double slash (/). Psalm 118 has 58 **briques** (primary accentual-stress units), all of which are marked by *soph pasuq* (29 times, at the end of each verse) and *atnach* (29 times, in each verse).

6. The prosodic structure of Psalm 118, in terms of its **briques** (primary syntactic accentual-stress units), may be displayed as follows: ^ represents *atnach*; ; represents *soph pasuq*; † represents *ole weyored*; and † represents all other accent markers.

I	A	¹ <i>hōdû la-yhwh kî tōb</i> ^	<i>kî lə'ólām ḥasdô</i> :
		² <i>yō'mar nā' yisrā'el</i> ^	<i>kî lə'ólām ḥasdô</i> :
	B	³ <i>yō'marû nā' bêt 'ahārôn</i> ^	<i>kî lə'ólām ḥasdô</i> :
		⁴ <i>yō'marû nā' yir'ê yhwh</i> ^	<i>kî lə'ólām ḥasdô</i> :
II	C	⁵ <i>min hammēšar qārā'tî yāh</i> ^	<i>'ānānî ḥammerḥāb yāh</i> :
	D	⁶ <i>yhwh lî lō' 'irā'</i> ^	<i>mah ya'āseh lî 'ādām</i> :
		⁷ <i>yhwh lî bə'ōzərāy</i> ^	<i>wa'ānî 'er'eh ḥəšōnə'āy</i> :
	E	⁸ <i>tōb laḥāsôt ba-yhwh</i> ^	<i>mibbəṭōaḥ bā'ādām</i> :
		⁹ <i>tōb laḥāsôt ba-yhwh</i> ^	<i>mibbəṭōaḥ bindīḥîm</i> :
III	F	¹⁰ <i>kol gōyîm səḥāḥûnî</i> ^	<i>bəšēm yhwh kî 'āmîlam</i> :
		¹¹ <i>sabbûnî ḡam səḥāḥûnî</i> ^	<i>bəšēm yhwh kî 'āmîlam</i> :
		¹² <i>sabbûnî kîd ḥōrîm dō'ākû kə'ēs qôšîm</i> ^	<i>bəšēm yhwh kî 'āmîlam</i> :
		¹³ <i>daḥōh dḥîṭanî lînpōl</i> ^	<i>wa-yhwh 'āzārānî</i> :
	X	¹⁴ <i>'ozzî wəzimrāt yāh</i> ^	<i>wayəḥî lî lîšû'āh</i> :
		¹⁵ <i>qôl rinnāh wîšû'āh bə'ohōlē ṣaddîqîm</i> ^	<i>yəmin yhwh 'ōsāh ḥāyil</i> :
		¹⁶ <i>yəmin yhwh rômēmāh</i> ^	<i>yəmin yhwh 'ōsāh ḥāyil</i> :

Christensen	Terrien
I A 118:1–2 B 118:3–4	A 118:1–4
II C 118:5 D 118:6–7 E 118:8–9	B 118:5–7 C 118:8–9
III F 118:10–13 <u>X 118:14–16</u> F' 118:17–20	D 118:10–12 X 118:13–14 D' 118:15–18
IV E' 118:21–22 D' 118:23–24 C' 118:25	C' 118:19–21 B' 118:22–24
V B' 118:26–27 A' 118:28–29	A' 118:15–29

9. Note the following list of significant compositional numbers at the boundaries of the verses counting from the beginning of Psalm 118:

118:1–5	34 (= 17 x 2) words
118:1–6	23 words before <i>atnach</i>
118:1–7	26 words before <i>atnach</i>
118:1–9	58 = 32 + 26 [compositional formula]
118:1–11	34 (= 17 x 2) words after <i>atnach</i>
118:1–13	46 (= 23 x 2) words before <i>atnach</i>
118:1–14	92 (= 23 x 4) words
118:1–16	51 (= 17 x 3) words after <i>atnach</i>
118:1–17	115 (= 23 x 5) words
118:1–18	26 words before and 23 words after <i>atnach</i>
118:1–19	23 words after <i>atnach</i>
118:1–20	64 (= 32 x 2) words after <i>atnach</i>
118:1–24	85 (= 17 x 5) words before <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 3, which leaves 26 possible boundaries to work with. In 13 out of 26 of these boundaries (or 50% 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 118.

10. Determining the details of the musical and literary structure of Psalm 118 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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