

Psalm 122:1–9

Translation, Logoprosodic Analysis, and Observations

A Song of Zion

Psalm 122:1–9

A. *The Joy of Going to the House of Yhwh in Jerusalem* (122:1–2)

[4.3]

122:1	A song of ascents / belonging to David /	<u> 12 2_</u>	<u> 3 3 0</u>
		121:7–122:1a	17 11 6
	I was glad ^a when they said to me //	<u> 13 1_</u>	<u> 3 3 0</u>
		121:6–122:1b	26 20 6
	To the house of YHWH let us go //	<u> 10 1_</u>	<u> 3 0 3</u>
		121:7–122:1	23 14 9
122:2	Standing ^a our feet will be //	14 1	3 3 0
	in the gates / of Jerusalem //	<u> 13 2_</u>	<u> 2 0 2</u>
		121:7–122:2	28 17 11

B. *Architecture: Jerusalem is Built as a Closely Compact City* (122:3)

[2.2]

122:3	Jerusalem / ^a is built //	<u> 13 2_</u>	<u> 2 2 0</u>
		121:8–122:3a	23 15 8
	Like a city / that is joined together within itself //	<u> 13 2_</u>	<u> 4 0 4</u>
		121:7–122:3	34 19 15

C. *Pray for Peace in Jerusalem Where the Tribes Sit on Thrones* (122:4–6)

[6.6]

122:4	There the tribes go up / the tribes of Yah /	<u> 17 2_</u>	<u> 5 5 0</u>
		121:8–122:4a	32 20 12
	It is a decree, O Israel //	<u> 10 1_</u>	<u> 2 2 0</u>
		121:8–122:4b	34 22 12
	To give thanks / to the name of YHWH //	<u> 12 2_</u>	<u> 3 0 3</u>
		121:7–122:4	44 26 18
122:5	For there (they were) /	<u> 5 1_</u>	<u> 2 2 0</u>
		122:2–5a	23 14 9
	They sat on thrones of judgment //	18 1	3 3 0
	the thrones / of the house of David //	<u> 10 2_</u>	<u> 3 0 3</u>
		122:1–5	38 23 15

122:6	Pray ^a for the peace of Jerusalem //	16	1	3	3	0
	they shall prosper / those who love you //	11	2	2	0	2
		<hr/>				
				43	26	17

122:1-6

D. Prayer: May Peace Be in Your Walls and Prosperity in Your Towers (122:7) [2.2]

122:7	May peace be within / ^a your walls //	12	2	3	3	0
	(And) prosperity / in your towers //	11	2	2	0	2
		<hr/>				
				26	18	8
		<hr/>				
				34	20	14

122:4-7a

122:3-7

E. Commitment: “Peace Be in You—I Will Seek Your Good” (122:8-9) [3.4]

122:8	For the sake of / my brothers and my companions //	10	2	3	3	0
	I will now say, “Peace (be) in you” //	13	1	4	0	4
		<hr/>				
				55	32	23
122:9	For the sake of / the house of YHWH our God //	16	2	4	4	0
	I will seek / your good //	8	2	3	0	3
		<hr/>				
				62	36	26

122:1-8

122:1-9

Scansion in Accentual Stress Units: (4.3).(2.2) . (6.6) . (2.2).(3.4) = 11 + 12 + 11 = **34**

Concentric Compositional Formula: 62 = 30 + 2 + 30 [word count—with heading]

Notes:

- 122:1^a Reading *dəḥî* in BHS as conjunctive.
- 122:2^a Reading *dəḥî* in BHS as conjunctive.
- 122:3^a Reading *mêrəḥâ* here in BHS as disjunctive.
- 122:6^a Reading *dəḥî* in BHS as conjunctive.
- 122:7^a Reading *mêrəḥâ* preceded immediately by *ga’yâ* (= *meṭeg*) here in BHS as disjunctive.

Summary of the Logoprosodic Analysis

1. Psalm 122:1-8 has 5 strophes: 122:1-2, 3, 4-6, 7 and 8-9.

A	122:1-2	2 balanced dyads + pivot:	[12 + 13] + 10 + [14 + 13]	= 25 + 10 + 27	morae
B	122:3	balanced dyad:	[13 + 13]	= 13 + 13	morae
X	122:4-5a	balanced dyad + pivot:	[17 + 10] + [12 + 5]	= 17 + 10 + 17	morae
	122:5b-6	2 balanced dyads:	[18 + 10] + [16 + 11]	= 28 + 27	morae
B'	122:7	balanced dyad:	[12 + 11]	= 12 + 11	morae
A'	122:8-9	2 balanced dyads:	[10 + 13] + [16 + 8]	= 23 + 24	morae

2. The first strophe (122:1–2) is a single part with four subdivisions: 122:1a, 1b, 1c and 2.
 - 121:7–122:1 **23** words
 - 121:7–122:2 **17** words before *atnach*
3. The second strophe (122:3) is a single part with two subdivisions: 122:3a and 3b.
 - 121:7–122:3 **34** (= **17** x 2) words
4. The third strophe (122:4–6) has two parts arranged in six subdivisions: 122:4a, 4b, 4c, 5a, 5bc and 6.
 - 121:7–122:4 **26** words before *atnach*
 - 122:1–5 **23** words before *atnach*
 - 122:4–6 **23** words
 - 122:3–6 **17** words before *atnach*
 - 122:1–6 **43 = 26 + 17** [compositional formula]
4. The fourth strophe (122:7) is a single part with two subdivisions: 122:7a and 7b.
 - 122:3–7 **34** (**17** x 2) words
 - 122:2–7 **23** words before *atnach*
7. The fifth strophe (122:8–9) is a single part with two subdivisions: 122:8 and 9.
 - 122:1–8 **55 = 32 + 23** [compositional formula]
 - 122:1–9 **26** words after *atnach*

Observations

1. The five strophes in Psalm 122 may be outlined in a menorah pattern, which is determined primarily on prosodic grounds, as follows:

A	I was glad when they said, “Let us go to the house of YHWH”	[4]	122:1
B	Our feet will be standing in the gates of Jerusalem	[3]	122:2
C	Jerusalem is built like a city joined together within itself	[2.2]	122:3
X	Pray for peace in Jerusalem where the tribes sit on thrones	[6.6]	122:4–6
C'	May peace be in your walls and prosperity in your towers	[2.2]	122:7
B'	For the sake of my brothers I say: “Peace be with you”	[3]	122:8
A'	For the sake of the house of YHWH I will seek your good	[4]	122:9
2. In terms of the 62 words in Psalm 122, the **arithmological center** falls between the words **כי שמה** (“for there”) at the end of verse 4. The initial **concentric compositional formula** is:

$$62 = 31 + 0 + 31 \quad \text{[word count—with heading]}$$

The **meaningful center** is found by including four words on either side of the **arithmological center** (with the 3-word heading included), as follows:

להודות לשם יהוה To give thanks to the name of YHWH —
 ישבו כסאות למשפט **כי שמה** For there they sat on thrones of judgment.

The **concentric compositional formula** becomes:

$$62 = 27 + 8 + 27 \quad [\text{word count—with heading}]$$

The **meaningful center** in this instance has the quality of a **riddle in the middle**, calling for explanation. Who are the ones seated on thrones? The content of the psalm itself informs us that it is representatives of the twelve tribes who take their place on the “thrones of the house of David.”

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

- | | | |
|---|--|--|
| 4 | יחדו ששם עלו שבחים שבחי יה
עדות לישראל
להדות לשם יהוה | Together there the tribes go up, the tribes of Yah.
It is a decree, O Israel,
To give thanks to the name of YHWH — |
| 5 | כִּי שָׁמָּה יֵשְׁבוּ כִסְאוֹת לְמִשְׁפַּט
כִסְאוֹת לְבֵית דָּוִד | For there they sat on thrones of judgment,
The thrones of the house of David. |
| 6 | שִׂאלוּ שְׁלוֹם יְרוּשָׁלַם
יִשְׁלִי אֶהְבִּיךָ | Pray for the peace of Jerusalem;
Those who love you shall prosper. |

The **concentric compositional formula** becomes:

$$62 = 20 + 22 + 20 \quad [\text{word count—with heading}]$$

or: 42 // 42 [word count—with “pivot” included in each half]

3. The 28-word nested **meaningful framework** (with the 18-word framework underlined) reads as follows:

- | | | |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | <u>שִׁיר הַמַּעֲלוֹת לְדָוִד</u>
<u>שִׂמְחָתִי בְּאֹמְרִים לִי</u>
<u>בֵּית יְהוָה נִלְךָ</u> | <u>A song of ascents belonging to David—</u>
<u>I was glad when they said to me:</u>
<u>Let us go to the house of YHWH.</u> |
| 2 | עַמְדוֹת הַיּוֹ רַגְלֵינוּ
בְּשַׁעְרֵי יְרוּשָׁלַם | Standing our feet will be,
In the gates of Jerusalem. |
| 8 | לְמַעַן אַחֵי וְרַעִי
אֶדְבַר־נָא
שְׁלוֹם בְּךָ | For the sake of my brothers and my companions,
I will now say:
<u>Peace be in you!</u> |
| 9 | <u>לְמַעַן בֵּית־יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ</u>
<u>אֶבְקֶשֶׁה טוֹב לְךָ</u> | <u>For the sake of the house of YHWH our God,</u>
<u>I will seek your good.</u> |

4. Summary of the concentric compositional formulae:

$$\begin{aligned}
 62 &= 27 + 8 + 27 && \text{word-count} \\
 62 &= 20 + 22 + 20 \\
 62 &= 16 + 30 + 16 \\
 62 &= 14 + \mathbf{34} + 14 && \text{vv. 1-2 || 8-9} \\
 62 &= 9 + 44 + 9 \\
 \\
 \mathbf{34} &= 11 + 12 + 11 && \text{SAS units} \\
 &\{ \mathbf{34} = \mathbf{17} \times 2 \} \\
 \mathbf{23} &= 7 + 9 + 7 && \text{\textit{briques} (primary SAS units)}
 \end{aligned}$$

5. In the prosodic structure of Psalm 122, 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 122 has 23 **briques**, 19 of which are marked by *soph pasuq* (9 times, at the end of each verse), *atnach* (9 times, in each verse), and *oleh weyored* (v. 1—after the heading). The remaining four boundaries are marked by *pāzēr* (v. 4), *dāhî* (v. 4), *ʔazla ləḡarmeh* (v. 5) and *ṭarḥâ* (v. 8).

6. The prosodic structure of Psalm 122, 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 šîr hammaʿălôt ləḡāwîd † šāmaḥtî bəʾōmərîm lî ^ bêt yhw̄h nēlēk :
² ʿōməḡōt hāyû raḡlênû ^ bišʿārayîk yərûšālāim :

B ³ yərûšālāim habbûyāh ^ kəʿîr šeḥubbərāh lāh yaḡdāw :

II	X	⁴ <i>šəššām ʿālû šəḇāṭîm</i> † <i>ʿədūt læyisrāʾel</i> ^	<i>šibṭé yāh</i> † <i>ləḥōdōt læhēm yhw̄h</i> :
		⁵ <i>kî šāmmāh</i> †	<i>yāšəḇû kisʾōṭ læmišpāt</i> ^ <i>kisʾōṭ læḇēt dāwīd</i> :
		⁶ <i>šaʾālû šəlôm yərûšālāim</i> ^	<i>yis̄lāyû ʾohāḇāyik</i> :

III B' ⁷ *yəḥî šālôm bəḥélēk* ^ *šalwah bəʾarmənōtāyik* :

A' ⁸ *ləmaan ʾaḥay wərēʿāy* ^ *ʿādabbərāh nā* † *šālôm bāk* :

⁹ *ləmaan bēt yhw̄h ʾəlōhênû* ^ *ʾāḇaqšāh tōḇ lāk* :

7. The 23 **briques** (primary SAS units) are distributed in 5 strophes in Psalm 122 as follows:
23 = (5 + 3) + 9 + (3 + 5) = 7 + 9 + 7.

The **arithmological center** of Psalm 122 falls between the two words *kî šāmmāh* (“for there”) at the beginning of 122:5a, with 31 words on either side. Psalm 122 has 34 SAS units, 23 **briques**, 9 versets, 5 strophes and 3 cantos. The **arithmological center** is in the middle canto, the middle strophe, the middle verset, the middle **brique**, and the middle two SAS units. There are 257 morae in Psalm 122—with 129 mora before the **arithmological center** and 128 morae after it.

8. Terrien finds 4 strophes in Psalm 122 (*The Psalms* [2003], pp. 766–67.) 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 five strophes.

Christensen	Terrien
I A 122:1–2	I 122:1–2
B 122:3	II 122:3–5
II X 122:4–6	III 122:6–7
III B' 122:7	
A' 122:8–9	IV 122:8–9

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

122:1–5 **23** words before *atnach*

122:1–6 **43 = 26 + 17** [compositional formula]

122:1–8 **55 = 32 + 23** [compositional formula]

122:1–9 **26** words after *atnach*

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 4 out of 7 of these boundaries (or more than 57% 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 122 including the 3-word heading.

10. If Book 2 (Psalms 42–72) was added to an original Deuteronomistic Psalter to form the Pentateuchal Psalter as we now have it that numbered **119** (= **17 x 7**) psalms, then Psalm 122 was originally Psalm 90 (121 less 31).

11. Determining the details of the musical and literary structures of Psalm 122 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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