

Psalm 19:1–15

Translation, Logoprosodic Analysis, and Observations

Hymn to God as Creator and Giver of the Torah

Ps 19:1–15

A. *The Heavens Declare the Glory of God in a Universal Language* (19:1–4) [6.8]

19:1	For the maestro / a <i>Mizmor</i> belonging to David //	12 2	<u>3 3 0</u>
		18:47–19:1a	43 32 11
19:2	The heavens / declare the glory of God (<i>EI</i>) //	15 2	4 4 0
	and the works of his hands / the firmament shows forth //	<u>20 2</u>	<u>4 0 4</u>
		18:47–19:2	51 36 15
19:3	Day after day / he puts forth speech //	12 2	4 4 0
	and night after night / he imparts knowledge //	<u>12 2</u>	<u>4 0 4</u>
		18:50–19:3	36 26 10
19:4	There is no speech / and there is no language //	13 2	4 4 0
	where their voice / is not heard //	<u>10 2</u>	<u>3 0 3</u>
		19:1–4	26 15 11

B. *The Melody of Their Words Runs Its Course Like the Sun* (19:5–6) [7.5]

19:5	Through all the earth / their melody is gone out /	14 2	4 4 0
	[and] ^a to the end of the world / their words //	11 2	3 3 0
	for the sun / there / (he has pitched) a tent for them //	<u>11 3</u>	<u>4 0 4</u>
		19:3–5	26 15 11
19:6	And he is / like a bridegroom / coming out of his chamber //	19 3	4 4 0
	like a champion rejoicing / to run his course //	<u>15 2</u>	<u>4 0 4</u>
		19:4–6	26 15 11

C. *The Sun Makes Its Circuit in the Heavens and Nothing is Hidden* (19:7) [3.2]

19:7	From one end of the heavens / (is its) going forth //	<u>14 2</u>	<u>3 3 0</u>
		19:2–7a	45 26 19
	And its circuit (goes up) to the other end //	<u>15 1</u>	<u>3 3 0</u>
		19:5–7b	25 17 8
	And there is nothing hid / from the heat thereof //	<u>13 2</u>	<u>3 0 3</u>
		19:6–7	17 10 7

D. The Torah of YHWH Is Perfect Making Wise the Simple (19:8) [2.2]

19:8 The Torah of YHWH is perfect / converting the soul // _19 2_ 5 5 0
19:4-8a 45 26 19

The testimony of YHWH is sure / making wise the simple // _21 2_ 5 0 5
19:4-8 53 30 23

E. YHWH's Commandment Is Pure Enlightening the Eyes (19:9) [2.3]

19:9 The statutes of YHWH are right / rejoicing the heart // _21 2_ 5 5 0
19:6-9a 32 20 12

The commandment of YHWH ^a is pure / enlightening the eyes // _19 3_ 5 0 5
19:4-9 55 31 24

F. YHWH's Judgments Are Priceless Bringing Great Reward (19:10-12) [5.7]

19:10 The fear of YHWH / is pure / enduring forever / _10 3_ 5 5 0
19:7-10a 34 21 13

The judgments of YHWH are true // _10 1_ 3 3 0
19:6-10b 45 28 17

(They are) righteous altogether // _8 1_ 2 0 2
19:4-10 65 39 26

19:11 More to be desired (are they) / than gold ^a than much fine gold // 18 2 4 4 0
 and (they are) sweeter than honey / and the honeycomb // _18 2_ 4 0 4
19:6-11 55 32 23

19:12 Also your servant ^a is warned by them // 10 1 4 4 0
 in the keeping of them / is great reward // _9 2_ 3 0 3
19:1-12 99 58 41

G. Keep Me from Willful Sins and Let My Words be Acceptable (19:13-15) [8.6]

19:13 His errors who can understand / 11 1 3 3 0
 of hidden faults / acquit me // _11 2_ 2 0 2
19:1-13 104 61 43

19:14 Also from willful sins / keep your servant / _12 2_ 4 4 0
19:10-14a 34 23 11

Let them not rule over me (and) then I will be blameless // 13 1 5 5 0
 and I shall be innocent / of great transgression // _11 2_ 3 0 3

	19:13–14	17	12	5
19:15 Let them be acceptable / the words of my mouth /	13 2	4	4	0
	19:10–15a	46	32	14
And the meditation of my heart / ^a before you /	13 2	3	3	0
	19:12–15b	31	23	8
O YHWH / my Rock and my Redeemer //	14 2	3	0	3
	19:12–15	34	23	11
	19:1–15	126	77	49

Scansion in Accentual Stress Units: [(6.8).(7.5).(2.2)] . (2.2) . [(2.2).(5.7).(8.6)]
 [(14 + 12) + 4] + 4 + [4 + (12 + 14)] = 30 + 4 + 30 = **64**
 or: **34 // 34** [with pivot counted in each half]

Concentric Compositional Formula: 126 = 63 + 0 + 63 [word count—with heading]
 or: = 63 // 63 [word count with pivot in each half]

Notes:

- 19:5^a Omitting *wau*-conjunction to improve balance in mora-count.
- 19:7^a Reading *'azla ləgarmeh* in BHS as conjunctive.
- 19:9^a Reading the sequence of two successive occurrences of *mêrəkâ* in BHS (and Ginsburg) as disjunctive. Letteris has *tarhâ* on the word *מִצְוֹת* ("commandment"). Cf. beginning of v. 10.
- 19:11^a Reading *dəḥî* in BHS as conjunctive.
- 19:12^a Reading *dəḥî* in BHS as conjunctive.
- 19:13^a Reading the sequence *gāyâ* (= *meṭeg*) followed immediately by *mêrəkâ* in BHS as disjunctive.
- 19:15^a Reading the sequence of two consecutive occurrences of *munah* before *atnach* in BHS as disjunctive.

Summary of the Logoprosodic Analysis

1. Psalm 19 has seven strophes: 19:1–4, 5–6, 7, 8, 9, 10–12, and 13–15.

A	19:1–4	triad & quatrain:	[12 + 15 + 20] + [(12 + 12) + (13 + 10)]	= 45 + 47	morae
B	19:5–6	triad & dyad in balance:	[14 + 11 + 11] + [19 + 15]	= 36 + 34	morae
C	19:7	balanced triad:	[14 + 15 + 13]	= 14 + 15 + 13	morae
X	19:8	balanced dyad:	[19 + 21] + [21 + 19]	= 40 + 40	morae
C'	19:9	balanced dyad:	[19 + 21] + [21 + 19]	= 40 + 40	morae
B'	19:10	balanced triad:	[10 + 10 + 8]	= 10 + 10 + 8	morae
	19:11	balanced triad:	[18 + 18 + (10 + 9)]	= 18 + 18 + 19	morae
A'	19:13–14	2 balanced dyads + pivot:	[11+11] + 12 + [13+11]	= 22 + 12 + 24	morae
	19:15	balanced triad:	[13 + 13 + 14]	= 13 + 13 + 14	morae

2. The first strophe (19:1–4) is a single part arranged in four subdivisions on the basis of word-count: 19:1, 2, 3 and 4.
 - 18:47–19:1 **32** words before *atnach*
 - 18:47–19:2 **51** (= **17** x 3) words
 - 18:50–19:3 **26** words before *atnach*
 - 18:48–19:3 **52** (= **26** x 2) words
 - 19:2–4 **26** words before *atnach*
 - 19:1–4 **26** words

3. The second strophe (19:5–6) is a single part arranged in four subdivisions on the basis of word-count: 19:5 and 6.
 - 19:3–5 **26** words
 - 19:2–5 **34** (= **17** x 2) words
 - 19:4–6 **26** words
 - 19:2–6 **23** words before *atnach*
 - 19:1–6 **26** words before *atnach*

4. The third strophe (19:7) is a single part arranged in three subdivisions on the basis of word-count: 19:7a, 7b and 7c.
 - 19:6–7 **17** words
 - 19:5–7 **17** words before *atnach*
 - 19:2–7 **51** (= **17** x 3) words
 - 19:1–7 **32** words before *atnach*

5. The fourth strophe (19:8) is a single part arranged in three subdivisions on the basis of word-count: 19:7a, 7b and 7c.
 - 19:6–7 **17** words
 - 19:5–7 **17** words before *atnach*
 - 19:2–7 **51** (= **17** x 3) words
 - 19:1–7 **32** words before *atnach*
 - 19:4–8 **26** words before *atnach*
 - 19:2–8 **34** (= **17** x 2) words before *atnach*
 - 19:1–8 **64** (= **32** x 2) words
 - 19:1–9 **32** words after *atnach*

6. The sixth strophe (19:10–12) has two parts arranged in three subdivisions on the basis of word-count: 19:10, 11 and 12.
 - 19:4–10 **26** words after *atnach*
 - 19:1–10 **34** words after *atnach*
 - 19:6–11 **55 = 32 + 23** [compositional formula]
 - 19:1–11 **92** (= **23** x 4) words

7. The seventh strophe (19:13–15) has two parts arranged in six subdivisions on the basis of word-count: 19:13, 14a, 14bc. 15a, 15b and 15c.
- 19:1–13 **104** (= 26 x 4) words
 - 19:13–14 **17** words
 - 19:11–14 **32** words
 - 19:1–14 **46** (= 23 x 2) words after *atnach*

Observations

1. The content of the seven strophes in Psalm 19:1–10 may be outlined in a menorah pattern, which is determined primarily on prosodic grounds, as follows:

A	The heavens declare the glory of God (<i>El</i>) in a universal language	[6.8]	19:1–4
B	The melody of their words runs its course like the sun	[7.5]	19:5–6
C	It makes its circuit in the heavens and nothing is hidden	[3.2]	19:7
X	The Torah of YHWH is perfect making wise the simple	[2.2]	19:8
C'	YHWH's commandment is pure, enlightening the eyes	[2.3]	19:9
B'	YHWH's judgments are priceless—in keeping them is great reward	[5.7]	19:10–12
A'	Keep your servant from willful sins and let my words be acceptable	[8.6]	19:13–15

2. In terms of the 126 words in Psalm 19, the **arithmological center** falls between the words **מַחְכִּימַת פְּתִי** (“making wise the simple”) at the end of v 8, with 63 words on either side. The *Concentric Compositional Formula* is:

$$126 = 63 + 0 + 63 \quad \text{[word count—with heading]}$$

$$\text{or: } 63 // 63 \quad \text{[word count with pivot in each half]}$$

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

עֲדוֹת יְהוָה נֹאמָנָה The testimony of YHWH is sure,
מַחְכִּימַת פִּי Making wise the simple,
פְּקוּדֵי יְהוָה יִשְׂרִים The precepts of YHWH are right,

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

$$126 = 59 + 8 + 59 \quad \text{[word count—with heading]}$$

$$\text{or: } 67 // 67 \quad \text{[word count with pivot in each half]}$$

Note that the analysis presented here finds a specific **meaningful center** whereas Labuschagne's analysis failed to come up with one (see his file on Psalm 19).

3. Summary of the concentric compositional formulae:

126 = 59 + 8 + 9 or: 67 // 67

126 = 57 + 12 + 57 or: **69 // 69** {**69 = 23 x 3**}

{with others in between}

126 = 15 + **96** + 15 or: 111 // 111

126 = 3 + 120 + 3 or: 123 // 123

64 = 30 + 4 + 30 or: **34 // 34** SAS (syntactic accentual-stress) units
 {**64 = 32 x 2** and **34 = 17 x 2**}

38 = 15 + 8 + 15 or: **23 // 23** *briques* (primary SAS units)

4. In the prosodic structure of Psalm 19, the basic building blocks in each poetic verset are the *briques* (primary SAS 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 carrot-like mark 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 carrot-like mark above the consonantal text, pointing to the left, used together with the accent *mêrəkâ* (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 *mêrəkâ* falls on the following word. This major divider is usually considered to be a stronger disjunctive accent than *atnach*.

In the prosodic analysis presented here, the presence of these three markers is indicated with a double slash (//). Psalm 19 has 38 *briques* (primary SAS units), 30 of which are marked by: *soph pasuq* (15 times, at the end of each verse), *atnach* (14 times, in vv. 2 through 15), and *ole weyored* (in v. 10a). The boundaries of the eight remaining *briques* are marked by *rəḥîa^c* (3 times, in vv. 5, 7 and 14), *rəḥîa^c muḡraš* (3 times, in vv. 3, 6 and 9), *ʔazlâ ləḡarmeh* (v. 5), and *pāzēr* (v. 15).

5. The prosodic structure of Psalm 8, in terms of its *briques* (primary SAS units), may be displayed as follows: [: represents *soph pasuq*; ^ represents *atnach*; † represents *ole weyored* and † indicates any other such boundary marker]:

I A ¹ *lamnaṣṣēah mizmôr ləḏāwid* :

² *haššāmayim məsappərîm kəḥôḏ ʔēl* ^ *ûma^cāšēh yāḏāyw maggîḏ hārāqîah* :

³ *yôm ləyôm yabbîaˁ ʾōmer* ^ *wəlaylāh ləlaylāh* † *yəḥawweh dāˁat* :
⁴ *ʾên ʾōmer wəʾên dəḥārîm* ^ *bəlî nišmaˁ qôlām* :

B ⁵ *bəkol hāʾāreš* † *yāšāʾ qawwām* † *ûḥiqšēh tēbēl millēhem* ^
laššemeš sām ʾohel bāhem :
⁶ *wəhûʾ kəḥātān yēšēʾ mēḥuppātô* ^ *yāšîs kəgibbôr* † *lārûš ʾōraḥ* :

II C ⁷ *miqšēh haššamayîm môšāʾô* † *ûṭəqûpātô ˁal qəšôtām* :
wəʾên nistār mēḥammātô :
X ⁸ *tôrat yḥwh təmîmāh məšîḇaṭ nāpēš* ^ *ˁədût yḥwh neʾēmānāh* *maḥkîmat petî* :
C' ⁹ *piqqûdê yḥwh yəšārîm məsamməḥê lēḇ* ^
mišwat yḥwh bārāh † *məʾîrat ˁênāyim* :

III B' ¹⁰ *yirʾaṭ yḥwh təhôrāh ˁōmedet lāˁad* †
mišpəṭê yḥwh ʾemet ^ *šādəqû yaḥdāw* :
¹¹ *hanneḥmādîm mizzāhāḇ ûmippaz rāḇ* ^
ûməṭûqîm middəḇaš wənōpəṭ šûpîm :
¹² *gam ˁəbdəḳā nizhār bāhem* ^ *bəšomrām ˁeqeḇ rāḇ* :

A' ¹³ *šəgîʾôt mî yāḇîn* ^ *minnistārôt naqqēnî* :
¹⁴ *gam mizzēḏîm ḥəšōḳ ˁəbdəḳā* † *ʾal yimšəlû ḇî ʾāz ʾētām* ^
wəniqqəṭî mippəšaˁ rāḇ :

¹⁵ *yihyû lərāšôn ʾimrê pî* † *wəheḡyôn libbî ləpānəḳā* ^
yḥwh šûrî wəḡōʾālî :

6. The **arithmological center** of Psalm 19 falls between the words *maḥkîmat petî* (“making wise the simple”) in v 8 (in the box), with a total of 63 words on either side. Psalm 19 has 38 primary SAS units, 15 versets, 7 strophes, and **3** cantos. The **arithmological center** is in the middle canto, the middle strophe, the middle verset, the middle two **briques** (primary SAS units), and the middle four SAS units. It falls in the middle verse as well in this 15-verse psalm.

According to the analysis presented here, the 38 **briques** are distributed in 7 strophes in Psalm 19 as follows: 38 = (8 + 7) + (3 + 2 + 3) + (7+8) = 15 + 8 + 15. The **concentric compositional formula** (on the basis of **briques**) is **23 // 23**, with the central pivot included in each half.

7. Terrien finds 3 strophes plus an “Envoi” (v. 15) in Psalm 19 (*The Psalms: Strophic Structure and Theological Commentary* [Eerdmans, 2003], pp. 205–16); but these “strophes” correspond to cantos in my understanding. Van der Lugt and Labuschagne find 8 strophes arranged in two cantos. Fokkelman finds 9 strophes. The analysis presented here, which is based on balance in mora-count and the concentric pattern in the distribution of syntactic accentual-stress units, indicates that there are 7 strophes in 3 cantos.

Christensen	Terrien	Van der Lugt & Labuschagne
I A 19:1–4	Heading 19:1	Heading 19:1
	I 19:2–7	I 1 19:2–4
B 19:5–6		2 19:5–7
II C 19:7		
X 19:8	II 19:8–10	II 3 19:8
C' 19:9		4 19:9
III B' 19:10–12	III 19:11–14	5 19:10
		6 19:11
A' 19:13–15		7 19:12–13
	Envoi 19:15	8 19:14–15

The difference in strophic structure in these analyses results primarily from the fact that the others fail to observe the symmetrical inverse structural pattern of Psalm 19 as a whole.

8. Determining the details of the musical and literary structures of Psalm 19 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.

9. Bibliography

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