

AMIR VASHEGHANIFARAHANI

Poetical Features of the Peshitta Psalter:
A Comparative Study of the Hebrew
and Syriac Psalms



AMIR VASHEGHANIFARAHANI

Poetical Features of the Peshitta Psalter:
A Comparative Study of the Hebrew
and Syriac Psalms



UNIVERSITY OF TARTU
Press

The University of Tartu, Faculty of Arts and Humanities, School of Theology and Religious Studies

Dissertation is accepted for the commencement of the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) in Religious Studies on March 10, 2025, by the Council of the School of Theology and Religious Studies.

Supervisor: Prof. Urmas Nõmmik (University of Tartu)

Reviewers: Prof. Willem van Peursen (University of Amsterdam),
Associate Professor David G.K. Taylor (University of Oxford),
Prof. Serafim Veli-Petri Seppäla (University of Eastern Finland)

Opponent: Prof. Serafim Veli-Petri Seppäla (University of Eastern Finland)

Commencement: Ülikooli 18–307, Tartu, on April 28th, 2025

This study was supported by the Dora Plus program under the European Union through the European Regional Development Fund and by the Estonian Research Council's institutional research project PRG938.



European Union
European Regional
Development Fund



Investing
in your future

ISSN 1406-2410 (print)
ISBN 978-9916-27-843-7 (print)
ISSN 2806-2639 (pdf)
ISBN 978-9916-27-844-4 (pdf)

Copyright: Amir Vasheghanifarahani, 2025

University of Tartu Press
www.tyk.ee

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	9
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION	10
1. Observations on the research history of Peshitta psalms and poetics...	10
1.1. Highlights in the research history of Peshitta psalms	10
1.2. Highlights in the research history on Peshitta poetics (and language).....	13
2. Purpose of study	16
3. Selected psalms: overview and scope.....	18
4. Basic hypothesis	22
5. Methodology of studying Hebrew psalms poetically	23
5.1. Analysis of strophes.....	23
5.2. Quantitative approach	31
5.3. Word repetition	35
5.4. Sound repetition	39
6. Methodology of studying Syriac psalms poetically.....	44
6.1. General remarks	44
6.2. Strophic demarcation	45
6.3. Word repetition and inclusion.....	45
6.4. Sound figures	46
6.5. Semantic and thematic analysis	48
6.6. Analysis of parallelism	48
6.7. Quantitative patterns	49
6.8. Comparative framework	50
7. Syriac metrics	50
7.1. Analysis of Syriac metrics	50
7.2. Early Syriac vocalisation: reconstructing syllable counts in classical Syriac poetry.....	52
8. General overview of methodology	56
9. Terminology	57
CHAPTER TWO: PSALM 8.....	59
1. General information.....	59
2. The text and strophic structure	59
2.1. The Syriac text	59
2.2. The Hebrew text.....	61
3. Word repetition and sound figures	65
4. Parallelism and syntax in the Syriac psalm	68
5. Quantitative poetic analysis.....	69
6. Conclusion	72

CHAPTER THREE: PSALM 19	74
1. General information.....	74
2. The text and strophic structure	74
2.1. The Syriac text	74
2.2. The Hebrew text.....	77
3. Word repetition and sound figures	80
4. Parallelism and syntax in the Syriac psalm	83
5. Quantitative poetic analysis.....	83
6. Conclusion	88
CHAPTER FOUR: PSALM 29	91
1. General information.....	91
2. The text and strophic structure	92
2.1. The Syriac text	92
2.2. The Hebrew text.....	94
3. Word repetition and sound figures	96
4. Parallelism and syntax in the Syriac psalm	99
5. Quantitative poetic analysis.....	101
6. Conclusion	104
CHAPTER FIVE: PSALM 86.....	106
1. General information.....	106
2. The text and strophic structure	106
2.1. The Syriac text	106
2.2. The Hebrew text.....	109
3. Word repetition and sound figures	111
4. Parallelism and syntax in the Syriac psalm	114
5. Quantitative poetic analysis.....	115
6. Conclusion	120
CHAPTER SIX: PSALM 96	122
1. General information.....	122
2. The text and strophic structure	122
2.1. The Syriac text	122
2.2. The Hebrew text.....	124
3. Word repetition and sound figures	127
4. Parallelism and syntax in the Syriac psalm	130
5. Quantitative poetic analysis.....	131
6. Conclusion	135
CHAPTER SEVEN: PSALM 120	137
1. General information.....	137
2. The text and strophic structure.....	137
2.1. The Syriac text	137
2.2. The Hebrew text.....	139

3. Word repetition and sound figures	140
4. Parallelism and syntax in the Syriac psalm	142
5. Quantitative poetic analysis	143
6. Conclusion	147
CHAPTER EIGHT: PSALM 124	149
1. General information	149
2. The text and strophic structure	149
2.1. The Syriac text	149
2.2. The Hebrew text	151
3. Word repetition and sound figures	152
4. Parallelism and syntax in the Syriac psalm	155
5. Quantitative poetic analysis	155
6. Conclusion	159
CHAPTER NINE: PSALM 146	161
1. General information	161
2. The text and strophic structure	161
2.1. The Syriac text	161
2.2. The Hebrew text	163
3. Word repetition and sound figures	166
4. Parallelism and syntax in the Syriac psalm	168
5. Quantitative poetic analysis	169
6. Conclusion	173
CHAPTER TEN: PSALM 155	176
1. General information	176
2. The text and strophic structure	177
2.1. The Syriac text	177
2.2. The Hebrew text	180
3. Word repetition and sound figures	182
4. Parallelism and syntax in the Syriac psalm	185
5. Quantitative poetic analysis	186
6. Conclusion	191
CHAPTER ELEVEN: THE POETIC PROFILE OF THE SYRIAC PSALM TRANSLATION ON THE BACKDROP OF HEBREW PSALM POETRY	193
1. Strophic structure	193
2. Word repetition	196
3. Sound figures	198
3.1. Alliteration	198
3.2. Dominant sound	201
4. Parallelism	202
5. Versification	203

6. Metre.....	205
7. Other poetic devices	210
8. Translation technique.....	211
9. Non-canonical Psalm 155 compared to canonical psalms.....	213
10. Further perspectives.....	213
GENERAL CONCLUSIONS.....	214
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	217
SUMMARY IN ESTONIAN.....	225
CURRICULUM VITAE.....	228
ELULOOKIRJELDUS	230

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Completing this dissertation has been a journey of growth, learning, and perseverance, and I am deeply grateful to those who have supported and guided me along the way.

First and foremost, I extend my heartfelt gratitude to my supervisor, Professor Urmas Nõmmik. His invaluable comments and constructive critiques have been instrumental in shaping this work. Throughout this process, he has shown unwavering patience and dedication, guiding me with thoughtful insights up to the moment. I have learned so much from him—academically and in terms of his exemplary character and commitment to scholarship.

I am also profoundly thankful to PD Dr. Peter Juhás from the University of Münster for his guidance regarding the Syriac texts. His expertise and valuable feedback have greatly enriched my investigation, and I have benefited immensely from his comments.

I sincerely appreciate Dr Roland Karo, the Head of the School of Theology and Religious Studies, for his consistent support and efforts in ensuring the smooth navigation of the administrative processes related to my dissertation defence. His communication and dedication have been crucial from the beginning to the end.

Furthermore, my sincere thanks go to my Tartu colleagues, Anu Põldsam in particular, and fellow doctoral students, Kristin Klaus in particular, who gave me valuable feedback regarding research and language issues.

I want to thank everyone who made it possible for me to stay and work in Tartu and Göttingen. My PhD studies and research were financed by the Dora Plus program under the European Union through the European Regional Development Fund and by the Estonian Research Council grant (PRG938).

I owe a special gratitude to my family, especially my elder brother Omid, who has supported me throughout my academic journey. His encouragement and belief in me have been a cornerstone of my success.

Finally, I thank my best friend, Marjan Dadgar, whose unwavering support and encouragement have sustained me from the beginning of this PhD to its completion. Her friendship has made this path both manageable and meaningful.

To all of you, thank you for being part of this journey. I could not have done it without you.

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1. Observations on the research history of Peshitta psalms and poetics

1.1. Highlights in the research history of Peshitta psalms

The study of the Peshitta Psalms (P-Ps)¹ has been predominantly focused on determining the influence of other versions, particularly the Septuagint (LXX) and Targum (Tg), on the Syriac translation. This narrow focus has often led to the neglect of other important features of the Syriac version and its translation technique. The lack of a critical text edition of P-Ps prior to 1980 and limited access to Hebrew witnesses, such as the Dead Sea manuscripts, have constrained these studies. According to Carbajosa's survey of the history of study and research, scholars including F. Baethgen (1878, 1882), B. Oppenheim (1891), J. F. Berg (1895), E. R. Rowlands (1939), A. Vogel (1951), J. A. Lund (1988), and J. E. Eriksson (1989) have contributed significantly to the field, each focusing on different aspects of P-Ps translation technique and its relationship to other versions.²

While these scholars have made valuable contributions, their studies have primarily concentrated on comparing P-Ps with the Masoretic text (MT) and other ancient translations such as Tg, LXX, and Vulgate (Vg). The analyses have largely emphasised morphological and syntactic aspects of P-Ps in relation to MT and other versions. However, many of these studies, particularly those by Baethgen, Oppenheim, and Berg, were based on the Psalter of G. Sionita, which is considered a late and less reliable source. This focus on comparative analysis and reliance on potentially problematic sources has limited the scope of P-Ps research, potentially

¹ The Syriac language was the Aramaic dialect of Edessa (now Urfa, in southeastern Turkey) and its province of Osroene. According to Weitzman (1999, 1), Syriac was the primary vehicle by which Christianity was spread from Edessa to Mesopotamia and the Iranian plateau. The Syriac translation of the Old Testament was designated as Peshitta (P), 'the simple or plain version' of the Old Testament, by the Syriac church at a relatively late date. (Carbajosa 2016, 262; Fischer 2014, 136; Tov 2012, 151; Weitzman 1999, 2; Würthwein 1988, 85; 1995, 85).

Historically, Würthwein (1988, 85; 1995, 85) holds that Syriac information about the origin of P has been devoid of substantive value and is largely based on legends. P has been directly translated from the Hebrew text and it dates back to the 2nd century (Joosten 2013, 76; Brock 2011, 13; Carbajosa 2008, 2; Weitzman 1999, 1–2; Dirksen 1993, 23–25). As per Weitzman's (1999, 160–162) investigation, it was hypothesised that the Syriac version did not stem from a direct translation of the Hebrew text but rather was derived from a Jewish Aramaic translation. Nevertheless, Weitzman ultimately dismissed this suggestion. Tov (2012, 151) estimates that Christian influences can be found in P. It might have been composed by the early Christians in the 1st or 2nd century AD, likely when Abgar IX, the king of Edessa, converted to Christianity during the 2nd century AD.

² Carbajosa 2008, 3–12.

overlooking other essential features of the Syriac translation and its unique characteristics.³

It is apparent that a significant gap exists in the scholarly approach to P-Ps, particularly concerning the analysis of its poetic elements and literary devices.

I. Carbajosa (2008): The best and most comprehensive study of translation techniques in P-Ps was done by Ignacio Carbajosa. In his study entitled “The Character of the Syriac Version of Psalms: a study of Psalms 90–150 in the Peshitta”, Carbajosa provided a detailed analysis of the translation technique and its features in 61 psalms. This study, which is based on the Leiden edition, includes seven chapters: “Introduction, Translation Technique,” “Particular Interpretations,” “The Relationship of the P-Ps to LXX and TG,” “The Hebrew Vorlage of the P-Ps,” “Changes in the Process of Textual Transmission,” and “A Comprehensive Conclusion.” In the first part of his study, Carbajosa attended to morphological and syntactic discrepancies, compared each selected verse from the Hebrew and Syriac texts and discussed their discrepancies. In the following analysis, he expanded the study and compared P-Ps also with LXX and Tg.

Carbajosa shows that the Syriac translator does not adhere to the Hebrew word order and does the translation according to natural Syriac syntax.⁴ This study indicates that additions and omissions play an essential role for the Syriac translator in conveying an understandable and readable version of the text while remaining faithful to the source language.

From the morphosyntactic point of view, Carbajosa illuminates that the translator did not only choose verbs according to his own standard but also the grammatical number of nouns chosen according to context and sometimes against the source text. On the semantic level, the Syriac translation also does not benefit from the uniformity of lexical correspondences. Moreover, it happens that one word is used to translate several Hebrew words. However, Carbajosa does not believe that this feature denotes that Syriac does not have a rich vocabulary.⁵

Furthermore, Carbajosa points out the translator’s imperfect knowledge of Hebrew and substantiates this with incorrect verbal roots used by the Syriac translator.

Carbajosa devotes a portion of his study to the translation technique of theological phrases, which he believes can be used to understand better the Syriac version’s theology and the translator’s identity. The study shows that the Syriac translator avoids attributing plurality to God and diminishes metaphorical language while speaking of God while having no problems at all with the use of anthropomorphisms and anthropopathism.⁶

³ Ibid, 13.

⁴ Ibid, 381.

⁵ Ibid, 382.

⁶ Ibid, 385.

As mentioned, Carbajosa devotes a chapter to studying the relationship between P-Ps and other ancient versions. He examined some cases in both the Syriac and Greek versions and concluded that only in some instances P-Ps were influenced by LXX, and therefore, the value of P-Ps for textual criticism is relatively modest.⁷ Similarly, he argued that the theory of the influence of Tg on P-Ps should be rejected because he could not find any support for it. Ultimately, he concluded that agreements between P-Ps, LXX and Tg go back to the Hebrew *Vorlage*.⁸

As for the P-Ps *Vorlage*, Carbajosa has cited 44 cases in which the divergence of P-Ps from the vocalised text of MT is due to a different interpretation of a *Vorlage* similar to MT. Likewise, he cited 42 instances in which the deviation of P-Ps with respect to MT must be traced to a different Hebrew *Vorlage*. He shows that in most cases, the *Vorlage* of P-Ps is similar to that of LXX or Qumran manuscripts. Finally, he concludes that the Hebrew *Vorlage* of P-Ps cannot with certainty be a pre-MT from the 2nd century AD.⁹ Moreover, Carbajosa has shown by many examples that the testimony of P-Ps, together with LXX and other ancient versions, retains readings that go back to the Hebrew *Vorlage* and diverge from MT.

L. H. Moretsi (2019): The most recent study on translation technique was done by L. H. Moretsi. In his PhD dissertation entitled “Translation Technique and the Translation of Verbal Forms in the Masoretic Text by the Peshitta Psalms 73–89”, Moretsi examines the verbal systems of Biblical Hebrew and classical Syriac with special reference to verbs, considering the contributions of various scholars. Attention has been given to translation techniques in general and to issues related to the specific translation technique of P-Ps. A comparative study of the verbs in Ps 73–89 in MT and in P-Ps has been carried out, taking into account other ancient versions as well. He showed that in some cases where differences appear, they are due to the translation technique. Likewise, he believes that in other cases, these differences are due to different interpretations of the same Hebrew consonants with different potential vocalisation options. In summary, he contends that P-Ps used a proto-MT. The evidence for another Hebrew *Vorlage* is scanty.¹⁰

The scholars mentioned above have primarily centred on translation techniques and do not focus on studying the poetry and poetic features of the original texts. This narrow focus on the mechanics of translation – such as word choice, sentence structure, and fidelity to the source language – has led to a substantial body of research that elucidates the technical aspects of Syriac translations. However, this approach may present a significant weakness from the perspective of literary analysis. By concentrating predominantly on how the texts were translated, scholars may overlook the nuanced poetic devices, stylistic elements, and artistic expressions inherent in the

⁷ Ibid, 385–386. What is more, it is his contention that “it is necessary to give some qualifications in order to avoid drawing hasty conclusions”.

⁸ Ibid, 387.

⁹ Ibid, 387.

¹⁰ Moretsi 2019, iv.

original works. Consequently, this gap in the literature could hinder a deeper appreciation and understanding of the poetic qualities and aesthetic dimensions of Syriac translations, thus limiting the scope of scholarly inquiry in the field of Syriac literary studies.

1.2. Highlights in the research history on Peshitta poetics (and language)

Our study offers a concise overview of select scholarly works that have addressed poetic devices within the context of the P-Ps translation technique. The existing literature reveals a spectrum of engagement with the poetic elements of P-Ps, ranging from cursory observations to more substantive analyses. As the primary focus of these studies has been the translation methodology employed in P-Ps, the treatment of poetic devices does not vary significantly among researchers.

G. Mushayabasa (2014): This study aimed to identify the technique used in the P translation of Ezekiel (P-Ez) by examining specific linguistic elements known as frames. It integrated frame semantics theory with a comparative analysis approach. Initially, the study investigated the application of frame semantics to analyse translation techniques. Following this, it provided case studies demonstrating the use of frame semantics in P-Ez. The primary hypothesis was that the Peshitta (P) translator operated at the level of semantic frames. By analysing these frames, the study sought to provide a more precise and comprehensive understanding of the translation technique used in P-Ez 1–24.¹¹

The study's findings indicated that the P-Ez translator operated mainly at the semantic frame level, employing several Syriac lexical units to convey the various frames conveyed by a single polysemous Hebrew word. However, the translation process was not entirely formulaic, as it was influenced by factors such as the use of synonyms, variations in style, and the presence of similar words. Furthermore, the investigation revealed that while P-Ez generally aligns with MT, there were instances where it corresponded to LXX instead of MT, suggesting the existence of a different original source. Although no clear interpretations were identified in P-Ez, the comprehensive analysis supports the idea that its original source was a Hebrew text closely resembling MT.¹²

Concerning poetic features, the investigation does not delve into the discussion of poetics within the P text and concisely discusses parallelism and repetition. Mushayabasa points out the cases where the translator avoids repetition or adds more words to convey the concept of the Hebrew text. In the case of avoiding repetition, he proposes that the translator of P-Ez likely considered the repetitions suitable for

¹¹ Mushayabasa 2014, 11.

¹² Ibid, 259–264.

the lyrical style of the Hebrew original but found them insignificant in the Syriac language.¹³

J. W. Dyk and P. S. F. van Keulen (2013): This study compared the MT of the Books of Kings with the Syriac text found in P (P-Kings). The primary goal was to understand the differences between these two texts, considering factors like language systems, translator tendencies, transmission history, and potential alternative Hebrew sources. The research involved a combination of linguistic analysis and textual history to assess the deviations between the texts. Linguistic analysis focused on the systematic differences arising from the change in language systems, while textual history examined incidental changes that may have occurred during translation or transmission. The study utilised a computer database to facilitate comparison and analysis, providing a comprehensive and systematic approach to understanding the relationship between MT and P-Kings.¹⁴ While many differences in MT and P-Kings were attributed to obligatory linguistic shifts during translation, others required further analysis through a combined linguistic and text-historical approach. By examining various linguistic levels and utilising a computer database, the research offers valuable insights into the complexities of translation and textual transmission in ancient biblical texts.¹⁵

It is important to note that the study focuses on repetition and explores the concept of parallelism as a consequence of repetition. The authors discuss that translation often involves instances where a single word in the target language encompasses the meanings of multiple words in the source language. In the context of translating from Hebrew to Syriac, for example, one Syriac term may effectively convey the nuances of several distinct Hebrew terms, revealing the breadth of meaning inherent in that particular Syriac word.¹⁶ According to the study, the following results were observed with respect to attitudes toward repetition: consistent parallelism without any semantic shift, no semantic shift, but Hebrew is typically translated differently, consistent parallelism with a semantic shift, and a semantic shift with Hebrew being typically translated differently.¹⁷

W. Th. van Peursen (2007): This study utilises computer-assisted linguistic analysis to examine the Syriac version of Sirach, comparing the findings with traditional philological research. The analysis reveals several key findings. The Syriac appears to be a free translation from a Hebrew source text, characterised by “targumic features” such as repetitive parallelism and avoidance of anthropomorphisms. The religious profile of the translator remains somewhat elusive, although specific characteristics suggest a non-rabbinic Jewish or Jewish-Christian background. Additionally, the study utilised a computer-assisted model to analyse phrase and clause

¹³ Ibid, 177.

¹⁴ Dyk and Van Keulen 2013, 3–7.

¹⁵ Ibid, 469–470.

¹⁶ Ibid, 191.

¹⁷ Ibid, 192.

structures, highlighting the translation's adherence to Syriac grammar while incorporating unique interpretations. The influence of the Hebrew source text on Syriac's linguistic profile was found to be minimal, with most deviations attributable to the translator's choices.¹⁸

Regarding poetic features, the study provides an overview of the devices, with a few examples illustrating their usage within the text. Van Peursen believes that during the translation into Syriac, many poetic elements were inevitably lost. The Hebrew text's conciseness, characterised by its consistent division into bicola and the relatively uniform length of each cola, required the use of more expansive terms in the Syriac version. It is often unclear whether the translator deliberately aimed to retain the poetic qualities of the Hebrew original; however, some poetic features were indeed preserved. Additionally, certain instances that cannot be directly explained by the Hebrew text likely stem from the Syriac translator's own interpretative efforts.¹⁹

The survey points out that parallelism and repetition are the most prevalent poetic characteristics of Syriac.²⁰ According to Van Peursen, word repetition in the translation method may be defined as a propensity to equalise the vocabulary across a long segment. From a literary standpoint, it can be viewed as a device used to enhance the coherence of a textual unit.²¹ As P sometimes replaces multiple Hebrew words with a single Syriac word, Van Peursen addresses the concept of repetitive parallelism, stating that this is one of the poetic features not inherited from Hebrew but rather follows an Aramaic/Syriac poetic convention.²² Van Peursen indicates that parallelism mainly derives from the Hebrew original, while repetition largely stems from the translator's approach to managing lexical diversity in the source text.²³

W. C. van Wyk (1978): This article investigates the P translation of the Song of Songs (P-Song), comparing it with the Hebrew MT. It finds that P-Song is generally literal and adheres closely to Hebrew. However, it uses a more limited vocabulary, simplifying complex expressions and sometimes misinterpreting rare Hebrew words. Despite some similarities to LXX, the translation was independently based on the Hebrew text.²⁴

Regarding the poetic translation, the article showcases that P-Song often diminishes the poetic quality of the original Hebrew text; the translator frequently converts metaphors into similes by adding the preposition "like". This results in a

¹⁸ Van Peursen 2016, 418–432.

¹⁹ Ibid, 62.

²⁰ Ibid, 63.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ibid.

²³ Ibid, 67.

²⁴ Van Wyk 1978, 181–189.

more precise text, though it loses some poetic appeal. Some poetic imagery is lost in translation and converted to a prosaic style in P-Song.²⁵

While some scholarly attention has been given to the presence of poetic features in P, the topic remains largely under-explored, particularly within the Book of Psalms. Previous scholars have contributed to our understanding of P poetry, laying a foundation for further research, particularly in recognising parallelism and repetition as core reflections of poetics in translation. While these studies have provided a solid groundwork, they have primarily focused on broader translation issues or specific linguistic aspects. The profound poetic features of P, especially in the psalms, have remained unexplored. This presents an exciting opportunity for more focused and comprehensive research on the poetics of P-Ps.

This necessitates further investigation to fully understand the extent and nature of poetic devices employed in P-Ps, as well as their potential impact on the meaning and interpretation of these translated texts. Such studies would contribute to a richer appreciation of P's literary artistry and its relationship to the Hebrew source text.

2. Purpose of study

The primary aim of our study is to investigate P-Ps from a form-critical perspective, focusing on identifying and analysing strophic structures and various poetic devices compared with the Hebrew text. It is important to note that the application of form criticism can be tailored to specific aspects of textual analysis. In the context of the current study, form criticism is employed with a narrower focus on the technical aspects of poetics.

By examining how the Syriac translator used poetic devices, this study investigates the poetic style of the psalms, paying particular attention to strophic structures, strophic markers, word repetition, sound figures (especially alliteration), parallelism, and metre in terms of the number of words, syllables, and consonants. We will thus provide an in-depth analysis of literary features in P-Ps, highlighting their complexity. The main intention is to find strophic markers, determine strophes within selected psalms and map and describe the sensitivity of the Syriac translator to Hebrew poetic phenomena, elaborating on the characteristics of the psalms. This study focuses on the poetic technique of translation in P-Ps in a comparative analysis with MT. It does not go further to analyse other ancient versions. While this study will not focus on text-critical issues, only a few of those affecting poetic devices will be included.

²⁵ Ibid.

Specifically, this study seeks to:

1. Discover and analyse the strophic structures within P-Ps, identifying strophic markers.
2. Examine the use of poetic devices in P-Ps, such as parallelism, word pairs, metre, and sound figures, primarily alliteration.
3. Conduct a comparative analysis between P-Ps and MT psalms to determine how the Syriac translator has reproduced or adapted the poetic style of the original Hebrew text.

For the first time, P-Ps will be analysed from the perspective of poetic devices, especially strophes, which have remained unexplored for so long. This will provide valuable insights into the unique Syriac poetic tradition and its relationship to other forms of ancient poetry. This study will be attentive to the poetic devices to go further and discover stylistic features of the P-Ps poetry and investigate, through a comparative analysis, the extent to which the Syriac translator in the P-Ps has reproduced the poetic style of Biblical Hebrew psalms. Furthermore, this study will open a new perspective on analysing the metre in P-Ps by using quantitative analysis of the number of words, syllables, and consonants to uncover possible hidden hints at the poetic techniques of the translator.

The research presented in this thesis adopts an innovative poetic approach to literary analysis, applying well-established methodologies from Biblical Hebrew poetic studies to examine Syriac literature. This comparative framework seeks to illuminate the structural and stylistic elements of Syriac poetry by utilising the analytical tools developed for Hebrew verse. The study posits that the rich tradition of Hebrew poetic analysis provides a valuable lens through which to view and interpret Syriac literary compositions, potentially revealing new insights into their formal characteristics and expressive techniques.

By leveraging this comparative methodology, the research aims to bridge two distinct yet interconnected literary traditions. The application of Hebrew poetic markers and features to Syriac texts not only enhances our understanding of Syriac literary forms but also facilitates a deeper exploration of the similarities and differences between these two Semitic poetic traditions. This approach promises to yield fresh perspectives on the shared heritage and unique developments within each linguistic and cultural context, contributing to a more nuanced appreciation of both Hebrew and Syriac poetic artistry.

The author approaches the analysis of psalm structures by concentrating on identifying strophes. A key focus of this examination is demonstrating how psalms are segmented into strophes and how the Syriac translator discerns these divisions within the Hebrew text, occasionally interpreting them differently. The study extensively scrutinises the strophes comprising a psalm, highlighting crucial elements of the poetic framework. Through a thorough examination of the strophic divisions present in selected psalms, the author endeavours to reveal recurring patterns,

regularities, and structural components that enhance comprehension of the organisation and composition of these ancient Hebrew and Syriac poems, admitting the fact that there is no consistent and regular understanding of dividing psalms into strophes. To put it differently, there is no fixed method or specific number of indicators that can be universally applied to identify every strophe.

Overall, by focusing on these objectives, the study aims to provide a deeper understanding of the literary features and poetic complexity of P-Ps, shedding light on the translator's techniques and the interplay between the Hebrew and Syriac poetic traditions. This research will offer new insights into the strophic and poetic characteristics of P-Ps, contributing to the broader field of biblical and literary studies.

3. Selected psalms: overview and scope

Considering the previous studies done in several books on the translation technique of P-Ps, this study aims to investigate a selection of psalms based on genres and poetic structures in order to create a new approach to P-Ps. Therefore, the scope of the current study will be centred on Ps 8, 19, 29, 86, 96, 120, 124, 146, and, for comparison, the non-canonical Ps 155.

The following considerations have influenced the selection of the psalms. To begin with, the dissertation was developed through joint readings and discussions of the psalms with my supervisor. We discussed specific themes, characters, and contexts relevant to each psalm and developed an understanding of them in relation to the current research. As a result, hymns in Ps 8, 19, 29, 96 and 146 were chosen primarily because of their elevated style and their potential to apply different poetic and stylistic figures. In other words, the psalms selected from the corpus of hymns are more likely to exhibit repetition, balance, word pairs, sound figures and other poetic characteristics, which are vital to the current research. With this knowledge, the author was able to choose hymns that would benefit this research confidently.

Furthermore, Ps 120 and 124 are two examples of Songs of Ascent sung by pilgrims travelling to Jerusalem. These psalms are distinctive for their brevity and frequent use of liturgical phrases. Psalm 120 is a thanksgiving psalm expressing gratitude for a lament that has been answered.²⁶ Psalm 124 is also a thanksgiving psalm, using vivid metaphors to convey a powerful emotional response to a miraculous escape from near disaster.²⁷ Psalm 86 is remarkable for its unique poetic profile, characterised by strong strophic markers. Psalm 155, a non-canonical psalm, has excellent potential for comparison when applying poetic analysis to P-Ps.

Another principle of selection has been the distribution of psalms in the Book of Psalms. Accordingly, the psalms are drawn from different parts of the Psalter: Ps 8, 19 and 29 from the first Davidic collection in the first Book of Psalms. Psalm 86,

²⁶ Waltner 2006, 589.

²⁷ Ibid, 603.

which is situated in the third Book of Psalms, exhibits distinctive characteristics worthy of scrutiny and is notably a late psalm and a non-Korahite psalm among Korahite psalms.²⁸ Psalm 96 belongs to the fourth book, being a hymn of praise. It extols the omnipotent and magnificent power of Yahweh, which is manifest in His absolute dominion over all of His creation.²⁹ Psalms 120 and 124 are psalms of ascent used by pilgrims to Jerusalem, and Ps 146 is a Hallelujah psalm, an individual hymn; all three belong to the fifth Book of Psalms. Psalm 155 is an apocryphal psalm that, as far as strophic division is concerned, contains a complex strophic structure.

In addition, there are also formal reasons why the selected psalms are suitable for poetic analysis. Psalm 8 is characterised by a strong concentric pattern; this psalm has been interpreted by some scholars as a combination of hymn, wisdom and lamentation.³⁰ This psalm might qualify as a creation psalm in light of its subject matter and context.³¹

A total of three separate motifs are incorporated into Ps 19 in order to create a unified hymn of wisdom: a praise of creation (vv. 2–6), a wisdom hymn (vv. 7–11), and a prayer for forgiveness and acceptance (vv. 12–14).³² Throughout this psalm, parallel phrases convey what the author wishes to emphasise. Several of these sentences are repeated with different words in order to convey similar information and concepts.³³ On the other hand, the psalm can be parsed into distinct strophes with definite language and topic. Psalm 19 constitutes an excellent example of poetry.³⁴ C. S. Lewis wrote: “I take this psalm to be the greatest poem in the Psalter and one of the greatest lyrics in the world.”³⁵

Psalm 29 is replete with hymnic characteristics, notably including the repeated manifestation of the voice of Yahweh, which resounds amidst a tumultuous storm no less than seven times throughout the composition’s vv. 3–9. Further contributing to this hymnal ambience is the depiction of a celestial assembly, wherein all heavenly entities converge to offer worshipful adoration to the Almighty, as detailed in the psalm’s vv. 1–2. Additionally, the psalm refers to the divine edifice, Yahweh’s temple, underscoring its centrality to the author’s religion. Finally, the composition exults in the kingly enthronement of Yahweh, who reigns over מְבוֹל (v. 10), a term that holds significance within the context of this psalm’s broader theological framework. Furthermore, Ps 29, by virtue of its highly structured and methodical strophic layout, coupled with its frequent reiteration of words, presents an ideal text for scholarly examination.

²⁸ Nömmik and Pöldsam 2018, 408.

²⁹ Bellinger 1990, 81.

³⁰ Craigie 2004, 106; Kraus 1993, 179.

³¹ Craigie 2004, 106; Anderson 1972, 100.

³² VanGermeren 2008, 324.

³³ Keating 2001, 3.

³⁴ Terrien 2003, 214.

³⁵ Lewis 1958, 63.

In Ps 86, there is an extraordinary amount of word repetition. In this regard, several studies of this psalm have sought to identify repetitive patterns, and many have argued that the entire psalm is organised according to a deliberate symmetry, whether concentric or otherwise.³⁶ A major characteristic of this psalm is the use of language found in other psalms.³⁷ Furthermore, the intricate style of Ps 86 and the switch from lament to hymn, followed by a request to be taught by Yahweh and a vow of praise and thanksgiving, complicate the psalm.³⁸

Psalm 96, which forms a part of Ps 93–100, can be situated within a broader thematic and generic context that is shared by this cluster of texts.³⁹ Of particular interest is the unique poetic makeup of Ps 96, which is notable for its employment of various literary devices, including but not limited to inclusion and chiasmus. Given these distinctive poetic features, Ps 96 offers an intriguing and fertile ground for analytical investigation, warranting a careful and thoughtful examination of its nuanced and intricately crafted language.

Psalms 120 and 124 are short, rather complex psalms. In the context of persecution by enemies, Ps 120 is described as a lament that asks for God's assistance. It is also possible to read v. 1 as if the prayers had already been answered, in which case the psalm would be a thanksgiving psalm.⁴⁰ As Allen mentions, there is some difficulty in understanding the psalm's structure because the psalm has "a disjointed ring on first reading".⁴¹ It appears that Ps 124 is a psalm of thanksgiving.⁴² It is easy to imagine the psalm being sung liturgically in worship communities because it demonstrates strong and important poetic features, such as repeated wording. Moreover, using a set of words, such as water, devouring sea monsters, and a fowler's trap, serves to demonstrate Clifford's definition of "swiftness and drama."⁴³

Psalm 146 is divided into two distinct parts using bicola (vv. 2–5) and tricola (vv. 6–9); the structure is a little challenging for a short piece. Moreover, Ps 146 conforms to the hymnic genre of the fifth book, opening and concluding with Hallelujah, a call to praise the Lord.⁴⁴

Psalm 155 is part of the five apocryphal psalms. The translation of this psalm is generally believed to have been made in the late 8th century, based on the discovery of Hebrew scrolls near Jericho around 786. The apocryphal psalms were recorded in the 10th century by Elijah of Anbar and later included in a 12th-century Syriac

³⁶ Nõmmik and Põldsam 2018, 399.

³⁷ Tate 1990, 378.

³⁸ Ibid, 377.

³⁹ VanGemeren 2008, 993.

⁴⁰ Bratcher and Reyburn 1991, 1047.

⁴¹ Allen 2002, 148.

⁴² Murphy 1875, 637.

⁴³ DeClaissé-Walford et al. 2014, 909.

⁴⁴ VanGermeren 2008, 1343; Ross 2016, 921.

Psalter and a 19th-century biblical manuscript.⁴⁵ Consequently, they are not connected to the P translation and were translated during the period of classical Syriac poetry.

The corpus of Ps 151–155 exhibits a complex textual history, with attestations in various ancient and medieval sources. These psalms are primarily preserved in Syriac manuscripts of the Old Testament, some dating from the medieval period and even later. Notably, Ps 151 has a broader attestation, appearing in LXX, which scholars generally date to the 2nd century BC. Archaeological discoveries have further illuminated the textual history of these psalms. The Qumran scrolls, specifically the substantial psalmic manuscript designated as 11QPs^a, contain Hebrew versions of Ps 151, 154, and 155. This manuscript, dated to the first half of the 1st century CE, supports the hypothesis that the Syriac versions stem from Hebrew prototypes.⁴⁶

The analysis of Syriac psalms, grounded in the Leiden edition (1980), offers a rigorous and systematic approach. This edition is based on Ms B.21 Inferiore (*Translatio Syra Pescitto*),⁴⁷ specifically 7a1,⁴⁸ from the Ambrosian Library in Milan. Textual variants from earlier manuscripts, particularly those prior to the 13th century, are examined to ensure a comprehensive understanding of the Syriac tradition. Corrections to errors in the base text are provided in the apparatus, which includes contributions from various Western textual traditions traced back to manuscripts 6t1, 7a1, 8a1, 8k2, and 8t1.⁴⁹ Notably, two of the four complete Bibles used in the Leiden edition have derived from this group. The earliest Psalter (service book) is also included.⁵⁰

Adherence to the BHS (*Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia*) verse numbering system fosters consistency and facilitates direct comparison with Hebrew analyses.⁵¹ The Leiden edition aligns the numbering of verses with the BHS, which is also reflected in this study. Additionally, the Leiden edition's psalms do not include titles like those found in MT psalms, and therefore, the titles are omitted in this analysis.⁵²

⁴⁵ Van Rooy 1993, 110.

⁴⁶ Rudnig 2024, 571; cf. Sanders 1965, 9. Noth (1930, 11) suggested that, prior to the discovery of the Qumran scrolls, the five psalms were derived from Hebrew sources. As far as Noth (1930, 12) was concerned, this psalm bears the closest resemblance to the Hebrew Biblical psalms. As far as strophic division is concerned, it is a very complex psalm, which may reflect the fact that we have ancient Hebrew poetry that dates only to the end of the 2nd century BC.

⁴⁷ Ceriani 1876.

⁴⁸ Manuscript designations are abbreviated based on the century in which they were copied. Accordingly, 7a1 is believed to date from the 7th century.

⁴⁹ De Boer 1972, vii–viii.

⁵⁰ Leiden Edition 1980, VII.

⁵¹ In fact, in the preface to the Leiden edition written before the completion of the BHS, De Boer and Baars (1972, vii–viii) refer to the numbering system of the *Biblia Hebraica* (BHK) but BHS retains the numbering of the BHK in the Book of Psalms.

⁵² Due to technical issues that were encountered, *Seyame* diacritical marks have been omitted from the textual analysis and word formations in this study.

4. Basic hypothesis

This investigation assumes that MT and the Hebrew source text (*Vorlage*) used by the translator of P-Ps belong to a similar tradition. P-Ps is a free-style translation of the Hebrew *Vorlage*, which is readable and entirely understandable. Accordingly, P-Ps stands out as a translation that pays greater attention to the reader than fidelity to every text detail. This approach allows the translator to focus on the primary meaning of the text, making it easier for the reader to understand.⁵³ P-Ps is an example of a translation that prioritises clarity over accuracy. It is worth mentioning that even though P-Ps benefits from freedom in translation, it is assumed that it reflects the majority of poetic devices from the Hebrew text.

The Syriac translator's distinct style allows for the effective transmission of specific poetic devices, notably parallelism, which closely mirrors the characteristics of the Hebrew text. However, other poetic devices, such as alliteration and word repetition, although present in P-Ps, are employed in ways that diverge from the supposed Hebrew source.⁵⁴ This suggests that the Syriac translator while maintaining fidelity to the core poetic structure of the *Vorlage* (supposing it is similar to MT), exercised artistic license in adapting and modifying other stylistic elements to suit the unique linguistic and aesthetic sensibilities of the Syriac language and literary tradition. Strophes are a fundamental feature of Syriac psalms, showcasing a diverse range of poetic techniques. Within these strophes, one can observe word repetition, alliteration, repeated syntactic structures, parallelism, inclusion, closure, chiasmus, and a balance between syllables and word numbers.

Among these poetic devices, word and sound repetition, semantic and thematic context, and parallelism are considered primary markers for delineating strophic divisions. The utilisation of other techniques, such as closure, inclusion, and chiasmic structures, is regarded as secondary in importance for identifying strophe boundaries. P-Ps typically exhibit poetic correspondences with the Hebrew text, including shared patterns of parallelism, word repetition, and strophic markings.

This alignment in poetic techniques between the Syriac and Hebrew texts suggests a deliberate effort by Syriac translators to preserve the aesthetic and rhetorical qualities of the original Hebrew psalms. Further investigation into these correspondences could shed light on the cultural and linguistic exchange between the two traditions, as well as the specific translation strategies employed in rendering the psalms into Syriac.

Despite variations in the application of Hebrew poetic devices in P-Ps, it is evident that the translator was deeply familiar with these techniques. While the Syriac translator did not adhere to the isosyllabic metrical pattern that characterised classical

⁵³ Carbajosa 2008, 381.

⁵⁴ Van Peursen (2007, 67) believes that parallelism and repetition are the most frequently occurring poetic features in Syriac psalms. Parallelism is primarily influenced by the Hebrew source text, while repetition is often a consequence of the translator's method for managing lexical differences in the original content.

Syriac poetry from the 4th century onwards, there are discernible indications of a movement towards balanced structures within P-Ps. This suggests an intriguing interplay between the source material and the evolving poetic conventions of Syriac, highlighting the translators' nuanced understanding of both traditions.

According to Turek, Bardaisan (154–222 CE) is a key figure in this development, whose work exemplifies a critical transitional phase in Syriac poetic composition. As evidenced in his surviving fragments, Bardaisan's poetry evolves from heterosyllabic patterns towards more structured forms.⁵⁵ The following lines are preserved in the writings of Theodor Bar Koni, dating back to the 8th century. As an illustrative example, the following two lines are presented here:⁵⁶

: ܠܡܢܐ ܠܒܐ ܠܡܢܐ : ܡܠܟܐ ܝܪܝܟ ܕܡܡܝܬܐ
ܡܡܠܐ ܠܕܡܡܬܐ ܕܡܡܠܐ : ܡܡܠܐܡܐ ܠܡܡܠܐ ܡܡܠܐܡܐ

'etpaṣṣat 'ā'ar bḡawwāh | wahwā šelyā wnawḥā
wēṣtabbaḥ mārā bḥekmīteh | wselqaṭ tawdīlā laḥnāneh.

Here is the metrical pattern of that stanza:

----- || ----- (7+6) [3+3]
----- || ----- (7+8) [3+3]

The lines exhibit a non-isosyllabic structure, featuring a caesura in each line, and adhere to a metrical pattern relying on three ictuses per half-verse (hemistich) in a 3+3 arrangement. What distinguishes Bardaisan's verse is the consistent placement of caesura and the fixed number of ictuses.⁵⁷ His poetic compositions would thus signify a transitional phase, evolving from the heterosyllabic pattern reliant on an almost fixed number of ictuses toward establishing a more regular isosyllabic verse, as exemplified in the works of St. Ephrem.⁵⁸

5. Methodology of studying Hebrew psalms poetically

5.1. Analysis of strophes

The poetic beauty of the psalms, a cornerstone of the Hebrew Bible, has long captivated scholars. Unlike some forms of poetry with clear stanzas⁵⁹ or verses, in the case of the psalms, a universally agreed-upon method for dividing them into strophes

⁵⁵ Turek 2010, 117.

⁵⁶ Romae 1737, 553–554 (quoted by Turek 2010, 117).

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ This study prefers the definition of “strophe” as a structural unit within a poem.

is lacking. This absence of a single, definitive approach presents both a challenge and an opportunity.

Many scholars have extensively studied the identification and demarcation of strophes within Biblical Hebrew poetry. Our study employed various methods from several scholars to understand strophic structures in Hebrew poetry. Primarily, it draws on the work of Fokkelman, Watson, Terrien, and Van der Lugt. It also incorporates approaches from Seybold, Alonso Schökel, Tsumura, and McCreesh regarding word and sound repetition. Each of these scholars has developed unique methodologies for analysing strophic structures within biblical psalms, all of which are discussed in this study.⁶⁰ These scholars have focused on features such as parallelism, word and sound repetitions, thematic shifts, subject matters and quantitative measurements.⁶¹ By comparing their approaches, we can better appreciate the intricacies of strophic analysis in Biblical Hebrew poetry.⁶²

W. G. E. Watson (1984): Watson's method involves segmenting poems into potential strophes based on bicola, tricola, and similar structures, alongside analysing verse length (stichometry). He thoroughly examines the components of each strophe, including keyword repetition, sound patterns, chiasmic structures, and closure, to comprehensively understand their poetic techniques and significance.⁶³

J. P. Fokkelman (2000): Fokkelman's approach to strophic analysis emphasises the semantic coherence and thematic shifts within biblical poetry. He considers parallelism, syntactic structure, and syllable count in identifying cola or verses. He focuses on the internal thematic cohesion and transitions in subject matter to delineate strophes, advocating for a flexible approach that accommodates the unique characteristics of each poem.⁶⁴

S. Terrien (2003): Terrien's approach considers shifts in speaker, thematic focus, and the dramatic progression of the poem as primary indicators of strophic boundaries. He also pays attention to rhythmic and metrical patterns⁶⁵, acknowledging variations due to emotional expression or stylistic choices. Terrien emphasises the

⁶⁰ For further discussion on strophes and the markers employed by various scholars, see Van der Lugt (2006).

⁶¹ According to Jonas Greenfield (1989, 103), West Semitic poetry generally exhibits the following characteristics: different types of parallelism, the use of word pairs, a metre based on accent or stress rather than syllables, established themes (*topoi*), chiasmus, alliteration, and repetition.

⁶² This study recognises the different possible interpretations from the manifold findings and, in doing so, makes clear that although the methods used are robust, they try to be consequent but are not the only ones possible. It identifies a field that is well suited to a range of different interpretations, indicating that interpretations in this field are shaped by the methods or provenance of individual scholars and calls for continued examination of other linguistic patterns, thematic links, or research avenues that may have fallen through the cracks. The study paves a new research path and asks for complementary approaches in the future.

⁶³ Watson 1984, 16–27.

⁶⁴ Fokkelman 2000, 80–84.

⁶⁵ Terrien (2003, 37) suggests that strict metrical patterns should not be anticipated.

importance of respecting the strophic structure in his commentary, deviating from modern translations that prioritise rhetorical logic over the original Hebrew poetics.⁶⁶ He identifies different patterns of strophic development for different genres, such as sequential development in hymns and a central thrust structure in lamentations.⁶⁷

P. van der Lugt (2006): Van der Lugt employs a systematic approach that combines formal, linguistic, and quantitative analysis. He identifies formal devices, such as vocatives and interrogative particles, as markers of transitions between strophes. He also conducts an exhaustive study of verbal repetitions and utilises quantitative methods like counting words or cola to identify deliberate structural units.⁶⁸

Strophic markers play a key role in delimiting strophes. This is why a **systematic overview of strophic markers** will follow. The table demonstrates the strophic markers used by the aforementioned scholars, Fokkelman, Watson, Terrien, and Van der Lugt. This detailed interpretation underscores the varied methodologies and preferences of each scholar in their use of strophic markers.

Scholars	Shifts in subject matter	Semantic/Thematic shifts	Parallelism	Chiasmus	Quantitative patterns	Inclusion/closure	Wordplay/Rhetorical questions	Word pairs/Repetitions	Sound repetitions
Fokkelman	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	–	–	–
Watson	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Terrien	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	–	✓	–	–
Van der Lugt	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Shifts in subject matter: All scholars consider shifts in subject matter, indicating their importance in identifying thematic breaks and transitions within the text. This reflects a shared understanding of the dynamic nature of the psalms and the need to consider both form and content in strophic analysis. A shift in subject matter usually involves a more pronounced change in the poem’s content, while a thematic semantic shift can be more subtle and nuanced.

Semantic/thematic shifts: All scholars prioritise shifts in meaning or theme, demonstrating the essential role of thematic development in understanding the progression and structure of the poem. This signifies a shared recognition of the importance of content in strophic analysis.

Parallelism: All scholars utilise parallelism as a primary marker, confirming its fundamental importance in ancient Hebrew poetry. This highlights the consistent recognition of parallelism as a key indicator of poetic structure and thematic relation-

⁶⁶ Ibid, 37.

⁶⁷ Ibid, 41.

⁶⁸ Van der Lugt 2006, 70–84.

ships. Van der Lugt,⁶⁹ Terrien,⁷⁰ and Fokkelman⁷¹ primarily analyse semantic parallelism in Hebrew poetry, focusing on the repetition of meaning in words, themes, and semantic fields. Watson, however, takes a more comprehensive approach by examining both semantic and morphological parallelism, incorporating the repetition of grammatical forms, and revealing a more profound complexity in the parallel structures of Hebrew poetry.⁷² Parallelism aids in segmenting poems into distinct units of thoughts and ideas, thereby creating rhythm and structure. Additionally, it enhances the aesthetic quality by demonstrating balance and symmetry in the verses. Furthermore, variations in parallel and identical notions can signal transitions between parts of a poem, helping to identify strophes.

Chiasmus: It is created as a literary device where a series of elements (a, b, c) is presented and then repeated in reverse order (c, b, a), forming a parallel couplet. These elements are typically sub-units of a sentence, analysed either semantically (meaning-based) or grammatically (structure-based).⁷³ All scholars acknowledge chiasmus as a significant structural element in ancient Hebrew poetry. It can emphasise contrasts, portray reversals, suggest similarity, connect different parts of a poem (as seen in Nah 1:2), or express strong denial (Ps 89:34).⁷⁴ This consistent recognition highlights the pervasive use of chiastic structures and their contribution to the artistry and meaning of the Psalms.

Quantitative patterns: All scholars employ quantitative analysis. This suggests a widespread interest in the numerical structure of the poems and its potential significance in conveying meaning and reinforcing structural patterns. Van der Lugt focuses on counting words or cola to identify symbolic numerical patterns. Fokkelman counts syllables, words, and cola to discern overall metrical patterns in psalms. Watson examines word stresses and verse lengths, while Terrien focuses on syllable stress. Terrien tends to use tonic accents, like in v. 3 of Ps 1, where he shows 3+2, 3+2+3.⁷⁵

Inclusion/closure: Fokkelman, Watson, and Van der Lugt consider inclusion/closure, indicating its relevance in demarcating larger text sections and highlighting overarching thematic unity in the psalms. This framing device involves the repetition of the same phrase or sentence at the beginning and end of a stanza or the entire poem. This technique creates a sense of enclosure, emphasising the enclosed content.⁷⁶ Watson characterises closure in poetry as both the manner in which a poem

⁶⁹ Ibid, 70.

⁷⁰ Terrien 2003, 38.

⁷¹ Fokkelman 2000, 80.

⁷² Watson 1984, 114–120. It should be mentioned that Watson applies the notion “envelope figure”.

⁷³ Ibid, 201.

⁷⁴ Ibid, 32.

⁷⁵ Terrien 2003, 38.

⁷⁶ Ibid, 282–283.

concludes and its nature as a self-contained, independent entity.⁷⁷ Watson refers to the inclusion feature as the “envelope figure”.⁷⁸

Wordplay / rhetorical questions: Watson, Terrien and Van der Lugt stand out as scholars considering wordplay and rhetorical questions. This suggests an emphasis on the stylistic devices and structure of the text employed by the psalmist to engage and persuade the audience.

Word pairs/repetitions: Watson and Van der Lugt employ this marker, underscoring the significance of repetitions in identifying both micro-level connections within strophes and macro-level structural patterns in the poems. Word pairs should consist of two words from the same grammatical class (e.g., noun-noun, verb-verb) appearing in parallel lines within a poem and recurring throughout the poetic corpus.⁷⁹ In terms of word repetition, both the exact words and their roots are considered repetitions within verses or larger poetic sections. This repetition and consistent structure serve to reinforce the meaning and aesthetic effect of the strophes. Van der Lugt and Watson address the repetition of a single word at the beginning of verses and larger sections of poems, known as anaphora.

Word pairs within strophic structures define boundaries, create cohesion, enhance thematic development, provide structural symmetry, facilitate emotional impact, aid in recitation and memorisation, highlight key messages, and introduce contrast and variation.

Sound repetitions: Watson and Van der Lugt analyse sound repetitions, including alliteration, assonance, and end rhyme, suggesting a nuanced approach that considers the auditory dimension of poetic language in addition to its semantic and structural aspects. A case in point from Van der Lugt is the alliteration *ḥsḏk 'bw' bytk / ḥwsy bk* in Ps 5:8, 12, *znḥt / zh šknt* in Ps 74:1–2, *bḥr / 'brk* in Ps 132:13, 15.⁸⁰ He sometimes considers the repetition of words while forming semantic parallelism as alliteration at the beginning of each verse line, strophe, canticle, or canto.⁸¹ Watson defines alliteration as more than just the repetition of initial consonants and divides it into three groups: alliteration, near alliteration, and alliteration clusters.⁸²

Overall, the overview reveals a consensus among scholars regarding the importance of parallelism, thematic shifts, chiasmus, shifts in subject matter and quantitative patterns as fundamental markers for strophic analysis. However, individual approaches vary in their consideration of specific markers like sound repetitions, inclusion/closure, and wordplay/rhetorical questions, suggesting a rich diversity of methodologies and interpretations within the field.

⁷⁷ Watson 1984, 62.

⁷⁸ Ibid, 282–283.

⁷⁹ Ibid, 128.

⁸⁰ Van der Lugt 2006, 84.

⁸¹ Ibid, 462. He views the recurrence of identical consonant sounds in multiple words within a colon, verse line, or larger structural unit as alliteration, which creates a distinct artistic impact.

⁸² Watson 1984, 225.

Based on the criteria mentioned by **Fokkelman**, let us examine an example that demonstrates how he delineated the strophes in Ps 8.⁸³ Fokkelman identifies a sophisticated structure within the poem, beginning with the observation that vv. 2ab and 10 form an “envelope” surrounding the main body of the poem, which spans vv. 2c to 9. This body is notably regular, comprising four small (S) strophes, each containing four cola. The first strophe includes cola 2a and 2b.

Strophes 2 and 3, encompassing vv. 2c–3 and 4–5 feature collective elements and frame a central strophe, v. 4, which employs a question-answer structure. Specifically, the question is presented in vv. 4–5, with the answer following in vv. 6–7. This arrangement results in a concentric ABC–C’B’A’ pattern at the strophe level, adding a layer of structural complexity. The ABC–C’B’A’ pattern in this context describes a concentric structure within the poem, where:

- A and A’ (vv. 2ab and 10): These verses form an envelope or frame around the main body of the poem, serving as the introduction and conclusion. They mirror each other in content or theme.
- B and B’ (vv. 2c–3c and 8–9): These strophes, filled with collectives, develop the poem’s ideas and surround the central core. They also mirror each other in content or theme.
- C and C’ (vv. 4–5 and 6–7): These strophes form the core of the poem, presenting a soliloquy structured as a question (C) and answer (C’).

This concentric pattern creates a sense of balance and symmetry within the poem, with the outer and inner sections mirroring each other and the core soliloquy providing a central focus. Further, strophe 4 covers vv. 6–7, while strophe 5 spans vv. 8–9. Finally, strophe 6 is found in v. 10. Demarcation markers in Ps 8 are:

- Envelope (vv. 2ab and 10): identified by its thematic and structural connection.
- Number of cola per strophe: each small strophe has four cola.
- Question-answer structure: strophes 3 and 4 form a question-answer unit.
- Thematic shifts: shifts in themes like collectives (strophes 2 and 3), God’s wrath, and renewed praise contribute to strophic boundaries.
- Transitive markers: in strophe 4, the four cola are each characterised by a transitive verb in the past tense, all of which have God as their potent subject.
- Quantitative patterns: Fokkelman also considers the number of syllables in strophes, although it is not the primary factor. Here, strophes 2, 3 and 4 have a near-symmetrical syllable count, reflecting their thematic connection.

Overall, Fokkelman uses a combination of thematic development, structural features (like question-answer), and quantitative patterns (syllable count) to demarcate

⁸³ Fokkelman 2000, 69–71.

strophes in Ps 8. This means that Ps 8 is composed of 180 syllables and 20 cola, with an average of 9 syllables per cola.⁸⁴

A case in point from **Watson** is his analysis of Proverbs 23:29–35.⁸⁵ After segmenting the poem, Watson shows that the poem is composed of 22 cola (nine bicola and a quatrain) and five strophes. Watson highlights some factors, including the repetition of words or roots of *'hr*, *yyn* and *'yr*, and end rhyme. He also observes that the overall pattern might be chiasmic, as specific keywords appear multiple times. Another notable feature that Watson observes is the double change of speaker and mood: he underscores that in vv. 29–30, an interrogative is followed by a statement. In vv. 31–34, the imperative mood is predominant, and finally, in v. 35, there is a quotation from the first-person speaker. Additionally, he notes that the first eight lines each evidently begin with the letter *l*.⁸⁶

A case in point from **Terrien** is the analysis of Ps 2:⁸⁷ Terrien's strophic division is primarily guided by shifts of the speaker, thematic focus, and dramatic progression.

Strophe I in vv. 1–3: The Tumult of the Nations. This strophe focuses on the rebellious nations and their defiance of God and his anointed. It is characterised by the repeated question “Why?” and the imagery of the nations' futile attempts to overthrow divine authority.

Strophe II in vv. 4–6: The Laughter of God. This strophe shifts to God's perspective, contrasting the nations' chaotic rebellion with God's calm derision and assertion of his anointed's authority. The divine proclamation of the king's enthronement on Zion marks a turning point in the psalm.

Strophe III in vv. 7–9: Divine Sonship of the Royal Anointed: The voice of the anointed emerges, proclaiming his divine sonship and the promise of inheriting the nations. The language shifts from proclamation to a more aggressive tone, with the anointed commanded to rule with an iron sceptre.

Strophe IV in vv. 10–12: Warning to the Kings of the Earth. The final strophe returns to the collective voice, addressing the kings of the earth with a warning. It calls for submission to God's anointed and offers a choice between obedience and destruction. The psalm concludes with a beatitude for those who trust in the Lord.

In addition to these thematic shifts, Terrien likely considers the psalm's rhythmic and metrical patterns in his strophic division. The bicola structure and the varying stress patterns within each strophe contribute to the overall rhythm and flow of the poem. The use of parallelism and rhetorical questions also plays a role in demarcating the strophes and creating a sense of structural coherence.

⁸⁴ Ibid, 69.

⁸⁵ Watson 1984, 22–24.

⁸⁶ Ibid, 23.

⁸⁷ Terrien 2003, 77–78.

Van der Lugt's strophic markers in Ps 120 are the following.⁸⁸ He divides the psalm into two cantos with further subdivisions into strophes:

- Canto I (vv. 1–4): this canto consists of two two-line strophes.
 - Strophe 1 (vv. 1–2): addressed to God (*YHWH*).
 - Strophe 2 (vv. 3–4): addressed to enemies (rhetorical question).
- Canto II (vv. 5–7): this canto is a monologue.
 - Strophe 3 (vv. 5–6): marked by the repetition of the root *škn* 'to dwell'.
 - Strophe 4 (v. 7): a single-line strophe ("mono-line strophe").

His rationale for strophe divisions is that Canto I has a shift in addressee (God vs. enemies), which marks the division between strophes. The repetition of *lšwn rmyh* 'lying lips' connects the strophes (concatenation) and emphasises the psalmist's plea. Canto II repeats the root *škn* 'to dwell' within vv. 5–6 defining the first strophe. Verse 7 stands alone as a single-line strophe, highlighting the climax of the "I-they" polarity. The repetition of *lšwn* for "lying" and *šlwm* 'peace' creates a connection between the strophes (alliteration).

The psalm has a responsion: the positioning of *ly ... npšy* 'my ... soul' in the opening strophes of each canto (vv. 1–2 and 5–6) reinforces the two-part structure. Furthermore, by using war imagery ("arrows" and "war") or *Kriegsmetaphorik* in vv. 4 and 7, each canto is concluded.

The quantitative structural aspects of Ps 120 provide some information, suggesting the number 7 might hold significance. Here is a breakdown of the observations and the potential implications: the psalm has 7 verse lines and 14 cola, which is precisely twice 7. Verse 4 falls in the middle (with 3+1+3 lines) if we consider verse lines.

The structure of strophes in terms of words follows a pattern: 13+14 words | 16+6 words. Interestingly, these numbers add up to 49 (7 x 7), the total number of words in the psalm. Only v. 2 (with 7 words) directly addresses God (*YHWH*), which appears twice (vv. 1 and 2).

In summary, Van der Lugt employs a combination of thematic shifts, repetition of keywords, and responsion to mark off strophes within the two larger cantos of Ps 120.

This study principally relies on the work of the scholars mentioned above, though it should be noted that there is no prescriptive technique for separating strophes. The methodology for marking strophes adopted in this study is based on several critical factors, including parallelism, word pairs and repetitions, sound repetitions (primarily alliteration), semantic and thematic context, inclusion, closure, chiasmus, quantitative measurements (syllables, words and consonants), and shifts in subject matter. Central to this methodology are strophic markers like parallelism, word repetition, sound repetition (especially alliteration), and the semantic and thematic context of the poem. Although the study recognises the significance of markers like inclusion, closure,

⁸⁸ Van der Lugt 2014, 348–349.

and chiasmus, it prioritises those that offer a more comprehensive understanding of the poem's structure and meaning.

Potential divisions within the psalms are identified, recognising that individual interpretations may differ depending on the specific poem. This multifaceted approach is implemented for both the original Hebrew psalms and their Syriac translations.

5.2. Quantitative approach

In the realm of Biblical Hebrew poetry, the quantitative approach has emerged as a valuable tool for unravelling the intricate structures and rhythms that underlie these ancient verses. While various quantitative methods have been proposed, one area of particular significance is the demarcation of strophes, the building blocks of poetic compositions. By analysing elements such as syllable count, stress patterns, word distribution, and consonant count, scholars have sought to identify the boundaries of strophes and gain deeper insights into the organisation and meaning of the poems. Additionally, the analysis of these elements not only contributes significantly to the understanding of redaction criticism but also highlights more essential passages in texts. In this discussion, we will delve into the quantitative methods employed by Watson, Fokkelman, Terrien, Van der Lugt, Oswald Loretz, and Ingo Kottsieper to explore how their approaches contribute to our understanding of strophic structures in Biblical Hebrew poetry. Delving into the numerical patterns woven into the poems, we can potentially uncover hidden layers of emphasis, parallelism, and sonic artistry that contribute to the overall poetic effect. This quantitative approach complements traditional methods of analysing parallelism, imagery, and thematic development, providing a deeper understanding of how the psalms not only convey meaning through words but also through their prosody.

W. G. E. Watson's quantitative method focuses on analysing the number of stresses or beats in a line of Hebrew verse. He identifies the dominant stress patterns in couplets and tricola, such as 3+3, 2+2, and 4+4, and acknowledges variations like 3+4, 4+3, and the Qinah metre (3+2). While he does not explicitly count syllables, his analysis of stress patterns implicitly acknowledges their role in shaping the rhythm and structure of Hebrew poetry.⁸⁹ For instance, in 2 Samuel 18:33, the stress pattern in the first line, "My son, Absalom, my son," and "my son, Absalom" (*bny 'bšlwm bny / bny 'bšlwm*), is 3+2, meaning there are three stresses in the first half and two stresses in the second half, following the pivot pattern.⁹⁰

J. Fokkelman's quantitative method focuses on the syllable count in cola, verses, strophes, and stanzas. He believes that a more precise measure would be to count syllables instead of using words as a metric, as the length of words can vary from one to five syllables or more.⁹¹ He uses the division formula x.y:z, where x is the

⁸⁹ Watson 1984, 98, 380–383.

⁹⁰ Ibid, 363.

⁹¹ Fokkelman 2000, 20.

number of syllables in a poem, *y* is the number of cola, and *z* is the average number of syllables per colon. One example is Ps 7, which contains 312 syllables and is divided into 39 cola, resulting in an average of 8 syllables per cola.⁹² This formula helps identify the boundaries of cola and verse lines (bicolon or tricolon).⁹³

Fokkelman also analyses numerical patterns within poems, such as the repetition of syllable counts in strophes or stanzas. For example, in Ps 74, he notes that three successive stanzas have the same number of syllables, and each stanza consists of three strophes with the same syllable count. He argues that these patterns are intentional and meaningful aspects of the poem's structure.⁹⁴

In addition, Fokkelman examines the relationship between the number of strophes and stanzas in a poem. He observes that most strophes consist of two or three verse lines, while stanzas usually have two or three strophes. He notes that stanzas with only one strophe often occur in the centre of a poem and contain a key thought or turning point.⁹⁵

Overall, Fokkelman's quantitative method involves a detailed examination of syllable counts, quantitative patterns, and the relationships between strophes and stanzas.

S. Terrien's quantitative method focuses on the metrical structure of psalms, analysing the number of cola and tonic accents within each verse. He observes that most psalms are composed of bicola or tricola, with varying numbers of tonic accents depending on the psalm's genre. For example, hymns and prayers of complaint typically have 3+3 tonic accents per bicolon, while prayers of lament often follow the 3+2 pattern of the Qinah metre.⁹⁶ However, Terrien acknowledges that rhythmic variations exist due to the poet's emotional expression or reflective pauses. He does not focus on syllable count but on the overall rhythm created by the combination of cola and tonic accents. He holds that regardless of the specific count of syllables, the rhythm remains unaffected.⁹⁷

P. van der Lugt's quantitative method focuses on the number of words and bicola/tricola within a given unit of Hebrew poetry, such as strophes, stanzas, canticles, and cantos. He emphasises the significance of specific numbers, particularly those connected to the divine name YHWH (17 and 26 in gematria, Y standing for both 1 and 10).⁹⁸ His methodology includes:

Counting words: he meticulously counts the number of words within various poetic units to identify central words or patterns related to the structure of poems. This quantitative analysis, conducted at the word level, could potentially reveal one

⁹² Ibid, 66.

⁹³ Ibid, 46.

⁹⁴ Ibid, 46.

⁹⁵ Ibid, 112.

⁹⁶ Terrien 2003, 38. He suggests that one should not expect strict regularity.

⁹⁷ Ibid, 38.

⁹⁸ Van der Lugt 2006, 84–85.

or more central words.⁹⁹ Furthermore, the word count of a canto or canticle effectively demonstrates its strophic structure. This can be observed in Ps 21, where each three-line strophe contains 24 words in vv. 2–7.¹⁰⁰

Counting bicola and tricola: By counting these basic poetic units, Van der Lugt establishes the overall structure of a poem, including the division into strophes and stanzas. This structural analysis helps reveal patterns of regularity and symmetry, such as equal-length stanzas or symmetrical sequences.¹⁰¹

Analysing numerical patterns: Van der Lugt examines the significance of specific numbers, particularly 17 and 26 (because of the YHWH name), as well as other recurring numbers like 13 and 11. He investigates their connection to the divine name and their symbolic value in relation to completeness, fullness, or totality. For instance, in Ps 23, the quantitative analysis of word count reveals a theological significance. The divine name YHWH, appearing only in the first and last verses, frames the entire psalm. The central message, “for you are with me” (v. 4d), is strategically positioned in the middle line and is both preceded and followed by precisely 26 words. This numerical pattern, where 26 corresponds to the numerical value of YHWH in gematria, emphasises the central message of God’s comforting presence and highlights the importance of the divine name within the psalm’s structure and meaning.¹⁰²

By applying this quantitative approach, Van der Lugt aims to uncover hidden structures and theological meanings within Hebrew poetry that may not be readily apparent through traditional linguistic or rhetorical analysis alone.

Besides previous approaches, there is the one introduced by **Oswald Loretz** and **Ingo Kottsieper** called colometry, which was developed to analyse West Semitic, particularly Ugaritic and Hebrew poetry. This method focuses on counting the consonants within a suspected colon. Since consonant clusters carry the core meaning in West Semitic languages, the number of consonants helps determine if the unit has the right weight and structure to be a complete verse element. Loretz and Kottsieper specifically saw colometry as a tool for precisely delimiting these smallest poetic building blocks called cola.¹⁰³ The example from Ps 2:2 displays the number of consonants in each colon.¹⁰⁴

ytyšbw mlky 'rš 13

w rwznym nwšdw yḥd 15

⁹⁹ Ibid, 86.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid, 87.

¹⁰¹ Ibid, 53.

¹⁰² Ibid, 85.

¹⁰³ Loretz and Kottsieper 1987, 24.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid, 26.

Colometry was initially developed for the study of Ugaritic texts, but it has also proven valuable in solving complex cases in Hebrew poetry. Moreover, the colometrical analysis is closely tied to the examination of parallelism, as the delimitation of the cola often provides insights into the structure and parallelistic patterns of the text. Notably, Loretz and Kottsieper have specifically employed the colometrical method not only for textual criticism but also for literary and redaction critical analysis, utilising this approach to identify and delimit different literary layers within biblical poetic texts.

Because there is no evident tradition of the rhythmic or other metric rules of Hebrew poetry that have survived from the period when the scribes wrote the ancient poetry, the colometrical method is the most straightforward and most suggestive tool for measuring the length of the cola and describing the relationship between cola within a bicolon, a tricolon or a strophe.¹⁰⁵

Although every scholar employs their own quantitative methods to analyse poems, Fokkelman and Van der Lugt place greater emphasis on counting measurements than others. However, their methods have some differences and similarities. Fokkelman focuses on syllables within each line, while Van der Lugt looks at the number of words and types of lines within a unit of poetry. Fokkelman uses syllable counts and the average number of syllables per colon to understand structure and rhythm. Van der Lugt uses counts of words, bicola/tricola, and explores the significance of specific numbers related to religious symbolism. Both scholars use quantitative methods to analyse Biblical Hebrew poetry.

Watson, Terrien, Loretz, and Kottsieper place less emphasis on quantitative methods. Watson focuses on stress patterns within lines, while Terrien analyses the tonic accents of psalms, taking into account the genre and specific elements such as cola and tonic accents. Loretz and Kottsieper stand out for their approach of counting consonants in each colon to enhance their analysis. Furthermore, it is worth mentioning that Loretz and Kottsieper are the only scholars in this overview who apply quantitative methods for literary and redaction critical purposes.

Given the aforementioned quantitative methods, this study will adopt a comprehensive approach by counting syllables, words, and consonants in both Hebrew and Syriac texts. By integrating these quantitative techniques, the study aims to uncover more nuanced and subtle poetic techniques. This approach will allow for a deeper understanding of the intricate structures and stylistic elements present in the texts, thereby contributing to a more refined analysis of their poetic significance.

Two examples of colometry as a quantitative method from Ps 19 are presented here: v. 1 is a balanced bicolon (a slight variation of up to three consonants)¹⁰⁶, and v. 8 consists of two bicola of the Qinah type (refers to an ancient Hebrew verse form

¹⁰⁵ Loretz and Kottsieper (1987, 22) hold that colometry aims to isolate and study the smallest poetic units and has more power to determine the smallest components of a poetic text in Biblical Hebrew poetry and we can probably call it “a sort of biblical microbiology”.

¹⁰⁶ Nömmik 2012, 400–408.

consisting of a bicolon with a longer colon at the beginning and a shorter colon at the end)¹⁰⁷:

Verses		Consonants	
1a	The heavens are telling of the glory of God;	17	השמים מספרים כבוד אל
b	and the firmament is declaring the work of his hands.	18	ומעשה ידיו מגיד הרקיע

Verses		Consonants	
8a	The law of Yhwh is perfect;	13	תורת יהוה תמימה
b	restoring the soul;	8	משיבת נפש
c	the testimony of Yhwh is sure;	13	עדות יהוה נאמנה
d	making wise the simple.	9	מחכימת פתי

A further example exemplifies the counting of syllables and words; see Ps 120:4:

Verses	Syllables	Syllables in verses	Words	Words in verses		
4a	7	14	3	6	חצי גבור שנונים	חצי/צו/גב/בור/ש/נו/נים
b	7		3		עם גחלי רתמים	עם/גח/לי/ר/ת/מים

5.3. Word repetition

Biblical Hebrew employs sound and word repetitions as potent poetic devices and strophic markers, which imbue the text with additional layers of meaning and stress. These literary techniques not only enhance the aesthetic quality but also facilitate the memorisation and oral transmission of these texts.

The comparative analysis of scholarly approaches to word repetition in Biblical Hebrew poetry reveals a diverse array of methodologies and theoretical frameworks, each contributing unique insights into the poetic devices and their functions within the texts. Here, a comparison of definitions regarding word repetition is presented, employed by scholars, including Watson, Van der Lugt, Tsumura, McCreesh, Seybold, and Alonso Schökel.

W. G. E. Watson's approach identifies three main types of word repetition: repetition-initial, end repetition, and immediate repetition. Repetition-initial occurs when consecutive lines begin with the same word or phrase, establishing rhythmic and thematic consistency. End repetition involves the repeated element appearing at the close of successive lines, creating a sense of closure and emphasis. Immediate repetition is characterised by a word or phrase being used and then repeated immediately afterwards, intensifying the focus on the repeated element.¹⁰⁸ Here are examples of these repetitions, respectively:¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁷ Nömmik 2016, 411; Wischnowsky 2001, 54.

¹⁰⁸ Watson 1984, 276–277.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

Repetition initial in Prov 30:4:

Who has ascended to the heavens and come down?
Who has gathered the wind in his garments?
Who has wrapped up the waters in his robe?
Who has established all the ends of the earth?

מִי עֶלֶה־שָׁמַיִם וַיֵּרֵד
מִי אִסַּף־רוּחַ בַּחֲפָנָיו
מִי צָרַר־מִים בְּשִׁמְלָה
מִי הִקִּים כָּל־אֲפִסֵּי־אָרֶץ

End repetition in Qoh 1:5:

Rise does the sun;
set does the sun.

זוֹרַח הַשֶּׁמֶשׁ
וּבֹא הַשֶּׁמֶשׁ

Immediate repetition in Lam 4:15:

Away! Away! Keep off!

סוּרוּ סוּרוּ אֶל־תִּגְעוּ

L. Alonso Schökel (1988) provides a comprehensive framework for analysing repetition through four primary factors: quantity/volume, quality, arrangement, and function. Quantity/volume considers the extent of repeated material, ranging from individual words or roots to entire sentences or verses. Quality examines the morphological and syntactical aspects of repetition, including repeated imperatives, participles, or specific grammatical structures. Arrangement assesses the positioning of repeated elements within the poem, whether they appear side-by-side, at the beginning or end of sentences, or in more complex patterns like chiasmus. Function investigates the purpose that repetition serves in the poem, such as emphasis, structure, or thematic development.¹¹⁰

Alonso Schökel also explores additional techniques such as anaphora (repetition at the beginning of phrases or verses), epiphora (repetition at the end of phrases or verses), inclusion (a repeated word at the beginning and end, appearing in both the first and last verses), chiasm, *Leitmotiv* (repetition of a word or lexeme throughout a poem), and refrain (repetition of a verse or phrase at regular intervals).¹¹¹

Repetitive arrangement in Isa 40:1.¹¹²

Comfort, comfort my people

נַחֲמוּ נַחֲמוּ עַמִּי

T. P. McCreesh (1991): His methodology for analysing word repetition involves identifying identical words within a single colon (intracolony repetition) or across multiple cola (intercola repetition).¹¹³ This approach highlights contrasts, emphasises

¹¹⁰ Alonso Schökel 1988, 76.

¹¹¹ Ibid, 77–82.

¹¹² Ibid, 77. For additional examples of repetitions, see Alonso Schökel 1988, 76–83.

¹¹³ McCreesh 1991, 122.

continuity or creates a sense of expectancy. McCreesh also examines root repetition, which focuses on the repetition of words derived from the same root,¹¹⁴ and wordplay (paronomasia), which uses similar-sounding words with different meanings to introduce irony, humour, or subtle shifts in meaning.¹¹⁵

As an example of repetition, Prov 20:6 features the word repetition *ʾyš* recurring in both clauses:¹¹⁶

Many a man proclaims, each one, his own virtue;
but who can find a man of trust?

רב־אדם יקרא אִישׁ חֲסִדוֹ
וְאִישׁ אֱמוּנִים מִי יִמְצָא

K. Seybold (2003) does not explicitly address word repetition. Instead, he examines how sound patterns and other elements structure and enhance the expressive impact of poetry, providing a broader perspective on the poetic devices used in Biblical Hebrew poetry.

P. van der Lugt (2006) highlights the importance of verbal repetitions for shaping the macrostructure of Hebrew poetry. Unlike internal parallelism, which occurs within a single verse line, Van der Lugt terms these higher-level repetitions as “external parallelism” or “distant parallelism”.¹¹⁷ External parallelism typically involves clusters of words that indicate the beginning and/or end of poetic sections.¹¹⁸ For example, in Ps 74, the phrases *lmh* *ʾlhym* / *ʾd mty* *ʾlhym* ‘why, O God’, and ‘how long, O God’, at the beginning of vv. 1 and 10, respectively, signal the start of new sections. Similarly, the phrases *ʾhllk* / *thltk* ‘I praise you’ and ‘your praise’ in Ps 35:18, 28 mark the conclusion of major units.¹¹⁹

In Ps 74, the repetition at the start of vv. 1 and 10 is part of a broader pattern that includes recurring words such as *lnšh* ‘forever’ (vv. 1, 10 and 19), *qdm* ‘long ago’ (vv. 2 and 12), *ʾwyb* ‘enemy’ (vv. 3, 10 and 18) and *qrb* ‘midst’ (vv. 4, 11 and 12). These verbal repetitions, known as responsions, do not need to follow a strict sequence.¹²⁰

Van der Lugt’s analysis also addresses phenomena like concatenation and inclusion, as well as anaphora and epiphora. Concatenation refers to verbal repetition that links successive lines without forming a strophe, as seen with the root *hlk* ‘to go’ in Ps 58:8–9. He defines inclusion as a single word, a short phrase, a line, or a notable expression that can act as a boundary for a stanza or an entire poem; likewise, an entire stanza can be reiterated to frame a poem or a part of a larger poem.¹²¹ It

¹¹⁴ Ibid, 142.

¹¹⁵ Ibid, 129.

¹¹⁶ Ibid, 129.

¹¹⁷ Van der Lugt 2010, 4.

¹¹⁸ Van der Lugt 2006, 571.

¹¹⁹ Ibid, 5.

¹²⁰ Ibid.

¹²¹ Ibid, 571.

marks the boundaries of the whole composition and strophe, exemplified by the root *bw* ‘to come’ in Ps 42:3 and 43:3–4.¹²²

Epiphora is a literary device that involves the repetition of a word or words at the end of successive lines, stanzas, or sections of a poem.¹²³ Responsion is a straightforward occurrence of word repetition, where the commencements and/or conclusions of the cantos, the hymns, or the stanzas in a poem align with one another.¹²⁴ And finally, anaphora is defined as the repeated use of the same word or words at the beginning of consecutive lines, stanzas, or cantos in poetry.¹²⁵

We can compare the issues of word repetition by gathering them into a table and presenting a systematic comparison:

Scholar	Key Concepts	Additional Techniques
Watson	Repetition-initial, end repetition, immediate repetition	–
Van der Lugt	External parallelism, concatenation, inclusion, verbal root	Epiphora (repetition at the end of lines), anaphora (repetition of a word or words at the end of successive lines), inclusion (reiteration at beginning and end), responsion (aligning commencements/ conclusions)
McCreesh	Identical words within/across cola	Root repetition, wordplay (paronomasia)
Alonso Schökel	Quantity/volume, quality, arrangement, function	Anaphora, epiphora, inclusion, chiasmus, <i>Leitmotiv</i> , refrain
Seybold	–	The way the elements are organised and arranged
This study	Key words reiterated within a verse, strophes, and poetic unit	Root repetition, inclusion (reiteration at beginning and end), chiasmus (inverted structures)

This study primarily focuses on the repetition of keywords within a poetic unit, emphasising techniques such as root repetition, inclusion, and chiasmus. Root repetition involves the recurrence of verbal and word roots, while inclusion refers to the reiteration of the same phrase at the beginning and end of a verse, strophe, or poem, effectively framing the poetic unit. Chiasmus employs inverted structures (e.g., A-B-C ... C-B-A) to create a combined unit, adding depth and complexity to the poetry.

This study aligns closely with the methodologies of Van der Lugt, McCreesh, and Alonso Schökel. It shares Van der Lugt’s emphasis on structural techniques such as inclusion and root repetition. Similarly, it parallels McCreesh’s focus on identical words and root repetition within and across cola and strophes. Alonso Schökel’s

¹²² Ibid.

¹²³ Ibid, 572.

¹²⁴ Ibid, 573.

¹²⁵ Ibid, 571.

comprehensive approach to analysing the dimensions and functions of word repetition also resonates with the techniques employed in this study.

Here is presented an example of word repetition as a poetic characteristic of a strophe in Ps 120 (vv. 1–3):¹²⁶

1a	In my distress unto Yhwh,	אל יהוה בצרתה לי
b	I cried out, and he answered me.	קראתי ויענני
2a	Deliver my soul, o Yhwh,	יהוה הצילה נפשי
b	from lying lip,	משפת שקר
c	from a deceitful tongue.	מלשון רמיה
3a	What shall it be given unto you	מה יתן לך
b	and what shall it do unto you,	ומה יסיף לך
c	deceitful tongue?	לשון רמיה

Verses 1–3 constitute a strophe because the phrase לשון רמיה ‘deceitful tongue’ is repeated in cola 2c and 3c; moreover, the correlation of יהוה and לי ‘to me’ in colon 1a and נפשי ‘my soul’ in colon 2a emphasises the strophic structure, complemented by a double question of לך ... מה ‘what ... unto you?’ in 3a and 3b.

5.4. Sound repetition

The beauty and expressiveness of Biblical Hebrew are not confined to its semantic content alone. They are significantly augmented by the intricate sound patterns woven into the fabric of the text, created through the artful combination of fundamental consonant and vowel elements. These sound figures, or poetic devices, play a crucial role in enhancing the aesthetic appeal and emotional impact of the psalms, adding layers of depth and meaning to the sacred verses.

W. G. E. Watson (1984): His approach categorises phonetic elements with a focus on the recurrence of specific sounds. Alliteration is defined as the repetition of the same consonant within a verse, creating a rhythmic and thematic link. It includes near-alliteration and alliterative clusters, creating cohesion, aiding memorisation, focusing attention on details, conveying energy, and marking line endings.¹²⁷ Assonance involves the repetition of vowel sounds within words, adding a melodic quality to the poetry.¹²⁸ Watson also emphasises rhyme, particularly sound identity between words, with a specific focus on end rhyme.¹²⁹ Here are examples of them: Alliteration in Ps 147:13:¹³⁰

¹²⁶ Regarding the English translation of the Hebrew text, I acknowledge the assistance of Bible.org, with the ESV, LSB, and NABRE being particularly helpful for my work.

¹²⁷ Watson 1984, 225–226.

¹²⁸ Ibid, 222–223.

¹²⁹ Ibid, 229–230.

¹³⁰ Ibid, 226.

He has blessed your children within you.

ברך בְּיָדְךָ בְּקֶרֶבְךָ

End-rhyme in Isa 33:22:¹³¹

For the Lord is our judge;
the Lord is our lawgiver;
the Lord is our king;
he will save us.

כִּי יְהוָה שֹׁפֵטֵנוּ
יְהוָה מֹחֲקֵקֵנוּ
יְהוָה מֶלֶכֵנוּ
הוּא יוֹשִׁיעֵנוּ

Assonance in Ps 120:7: *ī* is repeated: *damītī... hayītī*.¹³²

L. Alonso Schökel (1988): Alonso Schökel's framework for analysing phonetic elements includes alliteration, focusing on the repetition of consonant sounds at the beginning of words. Assonance involves the repetition of vowel sounds, while he emphasises end rhyme, defining it as the recurrence of a sound at the end of a word, hemistich, or verse. Alonso Schökel also highlights the dominant sound, which is a sound repeated throughout a text, contributing to its thematic and structural coherence.¹³³ Furthermore, he defines inversion and or partial inversion of sound as chiasmus.¹³⁴ As an example of an alliterative form, Job 5:8 is presented here:¹³⁵

As for me, I would seek God
and to God would I commit my cause.

אֲלֹם אֲנִי אֶדְרֹשׁ אֱלֹהִים
וְאֶל־אֱלֹהִים אֲשִׁים דְּבָרָתִי

In this bicolon, the eightfold use of *ṣ* at the beginning of words creates an alliterative effect. As evidenced, the start of the second colon, where the waw copula appears, does not interfere with considering *ṣ* as part of the alliteration.

T. P. McCreesh (1991) broadens the scope of phonetic analysis by considering alliteration as the repetition of consonants in any position within the verse. He also emphasises assonance, focusing on the repetition of vowel sounds. In addition to traditional rhyme, McCreesh introduces the concept of consonance, which involves the similarity of consonants regardless of the intervening vowels, adding another layer of phonetic texture to the analysis.¹³⁶ Proverb 15:31 exemplifies his approach:¹³⁷

'ozen šoma 'aṭ tōkaḥaṭ hayyīm
baqereḥ ḥaḳāmīm tālīn

One with ear attentive to life-giving correction
will dwell among the wise.

¹³¹ Ibid, 231.

¹³² Ibid, 224.

¹³³ Alonso Schökel 1988, 20–26.

¹³⁴ Ibid, 23.

¹³⁵ Ibid, 23.

¹³⁶ McCreesh 26–28, 1991.

¹³⁷ Ibid, 53.

The bicolon exhibits a powerful alliterative structure through the repetition of /o/ vowels and sibilants, /o, (z, š)/, which connects 'ozen to šoma 'at, and then šoma 'at is linked to tōkaḥat with the /o, a, (at, t)/ sequence in each. Lastly, the sequence /t, ḥ/ connects tōkaḥat and ḥayyīm. In the second colon, the consonance of /q/ and /k/ connects baqereḥ with ḥakāmīm, and the latter, picking up the /a, im/ assonance in ḥayyīm, is tied to tālīn by the same vowel rhyme.

K. Seybold (2003) offers a comprehensive approach to phonetic elements, defining alliteration as the repetition of consonant sounds at the beginning of words or syllables. Assonance is described as the repetition of vowel sounds within words, while rhyme is characterised by the repetition of sounds at the ends of words or lines.¹³⁸ Seybold also introduces additional concepts such as leading tone/dominant sound, onomatopoeia, and sound sequences, which enhance the expressive impact of the poetry and contribute to its overall aesthetic. He identifies the dominant sound that permeates a psalm, often triggered by a keyword or phrase, setting the tone and creating a sense of unity throughout the psalm.¹³⁹ A case in point will be from Ps 93:4:¹⁴⁰

Mightier than the thunders of many waters,
mightier than the waves of the sea,
the LORD on high is mighty!

מקלות | מים רבים
אדירים משבריים
אדיר במרום יהוה

The text features both assonance (*ayim – im – am*) and alliteration (*m, y*), generating resonant, roaring, and foaming sounds. These sounds grow faster and more intense with the repeated use of *m, b*, and *d*.

P. van der Lugt (2006): His analysis centres on alliteration, specifically the repetition of the same consonant sounds in two or more words within a structural unit.¹⁴¹ This technique serves to unify and emphasise particular sections of the text. This includes examining the placement of alliterative words and their roles in creating inclusions, anaphora, and epiphora. However, Van der Lugt does not explicitly address assonance or rhyme, nor does he introduce additional phonetic concepts. A case in point is from Ps 53:4–6 (Canto II), where *ḥ* is repeated to build alliteration: *y ḥdw . . . ḥd/pḥdw p ḥd . . . pḥd*, vv. 4 and 6a–b resp.¹⁴²

D. T. Tsumura (2023): His approach is more flexible regarding the position of repeated sounds. Alliteration is characterised by the repetition of consonants in any position within the verse, not limited to initial consonants. Assonance is defined as the repetition of vowel sounds, contributing to the overall harmony of the poem.¹⁴³

¹³⁸ Seybold 2003, 153–156.

¹³⁹ Ibid, 158.

¹⁴⁰ Seybold 1990, 61. The second colon has been emended.

¹⁴¹ Van der Lugt, 2006, 351.

¹⁴² Van der Lugt 2010, 113.

¹⁴³ Tsumura 2023, 41–42.

Tsumura does not explicitly address rhyme. Song of Songs 5:2 showcases his approach; see assonance and alliteration:¹⁴⁴

I was sleeping, and my heart was awake;
there was a sound! My beloved was knocking.

'anī yəṣṣēnā wəlibbī 'ēr
qōl dōdī dōpēq

The bicolon in question features numerous assonances, including $\bar{i} - \bar{i} // \bar{i}$ and $\bar{e} - \bar{e} // \bar{e}$ in the two lines, as well as $\bar{o} - \bar{o} - \bar{o}$ in the second line. Additionally, it includes alliterations of *q* and *d* in the second line, immediately following *qōl* ‘voice’.

In conclusion, the table illustrates the diverse methodologies and perspectives of scholars in analysing phonetic elements in Biblical Hebrew poetry. While there is a general consensus on the importance of sound patterns, particularly alliteration, assonance, dominant sound and end-rhyme, each scholar brings unique insights and additional concepts to their analysis.

Scholar	Alliteration	Assonance	Rhyme	Other Concepts
Watson	Recurrence of the same consonant within a verse	Repetition of vowel sounds within words	Sound-identity between words; types include end rhyme	–
Van der Lugt	Same consonant sounds in two or more words within a structural unit	–	–	–
Tsumura	Repetition of consonants in any position	Repetition of vowels	–	–
McCreesh	Repetition of consonants in any position	Repetition of vowels	Consonance: similarity in consonants regardless of vowels	–
Seybold	Repetition of consonant sounds at the beginning of words/syllables	Repetition of vowel sounds within words	Repetition of sounds at the ends of words/lines	Leading tone/dominant sound (sound in any position), onomatopoeia, sound sequences
Alonso Schökel	Repetition of consonant sounds at the beginning of words	Repetition of vowels	Repetition of sounds at the ends of words/verse	Dominant sound repeating a sound across a text, chiasmus (inversion or partial inversion of sounds)
This study	Initial consonants of words	–	End rhyme: same suffix/ending in successive cola	Dominant sound: a sound can be repeated in any position, chiasmus (inversion or partial inversion of sounds)

¹⁴⁴ Ibid, 41.

Scholars universally acknowledge the concept of alliteration, though their interpretations differ concerning the placement of consonants. This study defines alliteration by focusing on the initial consonant, a perspective shared by Seybold and Alonso Schökel. While assonance is commonly examined by scholars like Watson, Tsumura, McCreesh, Seybold, and Alonso Schökel, this research does not explore assonance patterns. While assonance is a recognised sound figure in many poetic traditions, its identification and analysis in Biblical Hebrew poetry present unique challenges.

The original Hebrew script primarily represented consonants, and the uncertainties surrounding the precise pronunciation of ancient vowels make it difficult to definitively identify patterns of assonance. Moreover, the ongoing scholarly debate about the original vowel sounds used further complicates the analysis of assonance patterns. Therefore, while acknowledging the potential presence of assonance, this study prioritises alliteration due to its more evident and consistent presence in the text. This allows for a more focused and in-depth analysis of specific sound patterns that are more readily identifiable and interpretable within the context of Biblical Hebrew poetry.

In studying alliterative forms, the presence or absence of the copula is not a primary concern. The focus is on the repetition of consonant sounds that create the alliterative effect, which contributes to the poem's aesthetic and mnemonic qualities. Whether the copula is included or omitted does not significantly alter the alliterative pattern or its impact on the poetic structure and memorability.

Rhyme is recognised by several researchers, including Watson, Seybold, and Alonso Schökel, although it is less prominent in Semitic languages. This study emphasises explicitly end rhyme, aligning with the approaches of these scholars. Moreover, the idea of a dominant sound, endorsed by Seybold and Alonso Schökel, along with Alonso Schökel's emphasis on sound chiasmus, are crucial components of the approach utilised in this study.

This study emphasises the role of alliteration, particularly the repetition of initial consonants in words within verses, strophes, and poems. While assonance is not explicitly addressed, the study highlights end rhyme, which is defined as the repetition of the same suffix or ending in successive cola. Additionally, the concept of dominant sounds is underscored, noting that they can be repeated in any position within the text to enhance their musicality and cohesion. Besides, this study highlights chiasmus, defining the inversion or partial inversion of sounds within strophes.¹⁴⁵

Here is presented an example of sound repetition (ק, כ) as a poetic characteristic of a strophe in Ps 86 (vv. 5–10):

¹⁴⁵ Terms will be comprehensively defined in the Terminology chapter.

5a	For You, Lord, are good, and ready to forgive,	בִּירְאָתָהּ אֲדָנִי טוֹב וְסָלַח
b	and abundant in lovingkindness to all who call upon You.	וּרְבִיחַסָּד לְכָל־קֹרְאֶיךָ
6a	Give ear, O Yhwh, to my prayer,	הֶאֱזִינָה יְהוָה תְּפִלָּתִי
b	and give heed to the voice of my supplications.	וְהִקְשִׁיבָה בְּקוֹל תְּחִנּוֹתַי
7a	In the day of my trouble, I shall call upon You,	בְּיוֹם צָרָתִי אֶקְרָאךָ
b	for You will answer me.	כִּי תַעֲנֵנִי
8a	There is no one like You among the gods, O Lord,	אֵין־בְּמוֹד בִּאלֹהִים אֲדָנִי
b	nor are there any works like Yours.	וְאֵין בְּמַעֲשֶׂיךָ
9a	All nations whom You have made shall come	כָּל־גּוֹיִם אֲשֶׁר עָשִׂיתָ יִבְּאוּ
b	and worship before you,	וַיִּשְׁתַּחֲווּ לִפְנֶיךָ
c	O Lord, and shall glorify your name.	אֲדָנִי וַיְכַבְּדוּ לְשִׁמְךָ
10a	For You are great and do wondrous deeds;	כִּי־גָדוֹל אַתָּה וְעֹשֶׂה נִפְלְאוֹת
b	You alone are God.	אַתָּה אֱלֹהִים לְבַדְּךָ

The consonants כ and ק together form a remarkable alliteration within the second strophe in cola 5a, 5b, 6b, 7a, 7b, 8a, 8b, 9a, and 10a.

6. Methodology of studying Syriac psalms poetically

6.1. General remarks

This dissertation employs a comparative literary analysis methodology, drawing on established techniques used in the study of Biblical Hebrew poetry to analyse Syriac texts. By leveraging the features and markers identified in Hebrew poetry, this study aims to enhance the understanding and interpretation of Syriac literary structures and poetic forms.

A background in Hebrew poetry serves as a strong foundation for analysing Syriac texts, offering a comparative framework to draw insightful connections between the poetic techniques of both languages, showcasing their shared features and distinct differences within their respective literary traditions. Familiarity with strophic markers in Hebrew poetry is invaluable for identifying similar structures in Syriac texts, even when they manifest in unique ways. Furthermore, experience analysing Hebrew poetry enhances sensitivity to patterns in language, sound, and structure, enabling the discernment of subtle poetic devices employed in Syriac texts. Although the study primarily employs a Hebrew approach, it will also consider how the psalms might be perceived from a classical Syriac perspective.¹⁴⁶

¹⁴⁶ According to Greenfield (1989, 103), the features of West Semitic poetry include parallelism of various types, word pairs and paired words, accentual or stress metre (rather than syllabic), set topoi, chiasmus, alliteration, and repetition. As per Stevenson (2015, 12–14), Ephrem the Syrian's classical Syriac poetry, especially his *madrashe*, showcases a rich tapestry of poetic techniques. Parallelism is a hallmark of his style, appearing in various forms but generally confined to shorter segments, unlike the extended parallelisms seen in biblical poetry. Chiasmus, a device adept at

6.2. Strophic demarcation

The primary focus of this methodology is to identify and mark strophes within Syriac texts using strophic markers derived from Hebrew poetic analysis. These markers include:

- a) word repetition,
- b) inclusion,
- c) sound repetition,
- d) semantic thematic shift,
- e) chiasmus,
- f) closure,
- g) parallelism,
- h) shifts in subject matter,
- i) quantitative patterns,
- j) word pairs,
- k) wordplay.

These indicators will aid in establishing the proposed strophic divisions while recognising the flexibility of Syriac poetic forms and allowing for multiple interpretations. To put it another way, they indicate a coherent correlation of verses as a strophe. Whether used individually or in combination, these poetic and literary devices are instrumental in identifying strophes within a psalm.

6.3. Word repetition and inclusion

The study will examine patterns of word repetition in Syriac texts, paying attention to both lexical and root repetition. Inclusion, a device where words or phrases are repeated at the beginning and end of a unit, will be identified. The analysis will consider how these devices function in Syriac compared to Hebrew, given the distinct linguistic features of each language.

expressing contrast, is used by Ephrem in multiple ways, while near-synonymous pairings are less frequent, but paired words play a key role in his favoured antitheses and paradoxes. Topoi, an inherent element of any literary work, are present in Ephrem's poetry. Though not primary structural components, alliteration and rhyme also feature in Ephrem's phonetic embellishments. He often repeats sounds, sometimes irrespective of their placement in words, or even treats similar-sounding letters as interchangeable. A more complex variation involves grouping two or three-letter clusters, highlighting their collective presence rather than strict sequential repetition. Notably, complete clause repetition, as described by Greenfield, is rare in Ephrem's work, except for the refrain recurring after each stanza in his *madrashe*.

In the following example, word repetition, as a poetic characteristic of the second strophe of Ps 29 in Syriac, is underlined:¹⁴⁷

II	3a	<u>The voice of the Lord is over the waters,</u>	ܡܠܐ ܕܝܗܘܐ ܥܠ ܡܝܢ.
	b	the <u>glorious</u> God thunders forth,	ܟܠܡܐ ܕܡܚܒܒܐ ܝܬܪ.
	c	<u>the Lord is over</u> many <u>waters.</u>	ܝܗܘܐ ܥܠ ܡܝܢ ܡܝܬܝܡܐ.
	4	<u>The voice of the Lord</u> is strong, and <u>the voice</u> <u>of the Lord</u> is <u>glorious.</u>	ܡܠܐ ܕܝܗܘܐ ܕܝܠܐ ܡܠܐ ܕܝܗܘܐ ܡܚܒܒܐ.

Verses 3–4 form the second strophe because of the use of ܡܠܐ ܕܝܗܘܐ ‘the voice of the Lord’ at the beginning of vv. 3 and 4 on the one hand, and the repetition of words ܝܗܐ in cola 3a, 3c and 4, ܡܠܐ ܥܠ ܡܝܢ ‘the Lord is over the waters’ in cola 3a and 3c, ܡܚܒܐ ‘glorious’ in cola 3b and 4 on the other hand.

These verses, containing ܡܠܐ ܕܝܗܘܐ in cola 3a and 4, form an inclusion that strengthens the strophic structure.

6.4. Sound figures

Sound repetition, a crucial element in Hebrew poetry, will be explored in the Syriac context. This includes the identification of primary alliteration, dominant sound, and end rhyme. The analysis will consider how the phonological characteristics of Syriac may influence these sound figures, potentially resulting in patterns distinct from those found in Hebrew.

While there are no issues related to the pronunciation of, e.g., ܢ, it is imperative to address the phonological considerations surrounding the alliterative use of ܠ and ܠ in Syriac texts, particularly within the context of P. Despite the fact that ܠ and ܠ are considered an alliterative pair in Hebrew poetry by several authors, the author of this dissertation acknowledges the ongoing scholarly debate regarding the historical pronunciation of these consonants and their potential for alliteration.

The validity of considering ܠ and ܠ as alliterative pairs is contingent upon the absence of significant phonetic distinction at the time of P’s composition. While the preservation of phonemic contrast between these consonants in Neo-Aramaic dialects, especially in word-initial positions, presents a potential challenge to this argument, several factors may support the alliterative approach adopted in this study:

Phonetic proximity: both ܠ and ܠ are classified as gutturals, with ܠ typically realised as a glottal stop and ܠ as a voiced pharyngeal fricative. Despite their distinct articulatory properties, their shared glottal nature establishes a phonetic proximity that can justify their treatment as alliterative partners.¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁷ The English translations here and in the following are according to Taylor et al. (2020), slightly modified.

¹⁴⁸ Rubens Duval (1881, 19–20) holds the view that within the phonological system, ܠ serves as an emphatic guttural enhancement, appearing in consonantal alternations as a strengthened

6.5. Semantic and thematic analysis

Semantic thematic shifts and closure devices will be identified in Syriac texts. This analysis will consider how themes develop in strophes and connect verses to each other. The study will explore whether these devices function, besides other poetic devices, similarly or differently in Syriac compared to Hebrew poetry.

In the following example, semantic and thematic shift along with closure as poetic characteristics of Ps 19 is underlined:

- | | | |
|-----|---|--|
| 8a | The law of the Lord is without blemish, and it restores the soul; | חֻשְׁתִּי הַמִּצְוָה לַיהוָה בְּלִמְדָּה וְשׁוֹמְרֵיהֶם יִשְׁלְמוּ. |
| b | the testimony of the Lord is trustworthy, and it imparts wisdom to babes. | מִשְׁמַרְתִּי הַמִּצְוָה לַיהוָה אֱמוּנָה וְיִלְדֵי חָכְמָה יִלְבְּשׁוּ. |
| 9a | The commandments of the Lord are upright, and they make the heart glad; | הַמִּצְוֹת הַיְשָׁרוֹת הַלֵּב יִשְׂמְחוּ וְהַנֶּפֶשׁ יִשְׂמְחֶנּוּ. |
| b | the commandment of the Lord is proven, and it illumines the eyes. | הַמִּצְוָה הַיְשָׁרָה הַיָּסֵד הָעֵינַיִם וְהַנֶּפֶשׁ יִשְׂמְחֶנּוּ. |
| 10a | The fear of the Lord is pure, and it endures forever; | הַיִּירָאָה לַיהוָה טָהוֹרָה וְעַד עֲדָם לְעֹלָם. |
| b | The judgments of the Lord are true, and they are just in every way. | הַדִּשְׁמוֹנִים הַיְשָׁרוֹת הַמִּשְׁפָּטִים כֻּלָּם יָסֵד. |
| 11a | And they are more to be desired than gold and than precious stones, | וְהֵם יְרֻכָּה מִכֶּסֶד מִזָּהָב וּמִבְּרִיטִים. |
| b | and they are sweeter than honey and the honeycomb. | וְהֵם יְרֻכָּה מִדְּבַשׁ וּמִתְּבַשְׁבָּשׁ. |

The third strophe consists of vv. 8–11, which are connected not only semantically, arguing for the fulfilment of the law, along with petitioning, exercising self-control and allowing prayers, but they also have the same syntax except for the last verse. As such, this type of syntactical structure indicates that closure has been formed in this strophe.¹⁴⁹

6.6. Analysis of parallelism

Parallelism, a fundamental feature of Hebrew poetry, will be investigated in Syriac texts. The analysis will focus on identifying two types of parallelism, synonymous and extrapolative. While the Hebrew approach will guide this analysis, it is essential to note that Syriac poetry may exhibit unique parallelistic structures that differ from Hebrew conventions.

In this example from the fifth strophe of Ps 146, vv. 7b–8, parallelism is demonstrated:

¹⁴⁹ It represents the closure perfectly. For more details on the closure, see the classical work by Watson (2009, 62–65).

7b	The Lord gives food to the hungry,	ܡܫܬܐ ܠܝܬܝܢ ܠܚܝܬܐ ܕܡܝܬܐ.
c	the Lord releases the prisoners,	ܕܝܬܐ ܕܡܝܬܐ ܕܡܝܬܐ.
8a	the Lord opens the eyes of the blind,	ܕܝܬܐ ܕܡܝܬܐ ܕܡܝܬܐ.
b	the Lord lifts up those who are bowed over,	ܕܝܬܐ ܕܡܝܬܐ ܕܡܝܬܐ.
c	the Lord loves the righteous.	ܕܝܬܐ ܕܡܝܬܐ ܕܡܝܬܐ.

The fifth strophe, encompassing vv. 7b–8, is notable for its dominant synonymous parallelism and consistent syntax, with the exception of the initial colon in 7b containing an indirect object.

6.7. Quantitative patterns

The study will investigate quantitative patterns in Syriac poetry, including syllable count, word count, and line length (counting consonants). While applying the methodology of the Hebrew poetics, it is crucial to acknowledge that Syriac prosody may follow different rules or conventions. The analysis will highlight both similarities and differences in quantitative aspects between Hebrew and Syriac poetry. Quantitative analysis is crucial for understanding the rhythmic and structural intricacies of Syriac psalms. This analysis will not only highlight potential hidden hints in the poetic techniques employed by translators but also shed light on the relationship between form and meaning in Syriac poetry.¹⁵⁰

Specifically, by comparing the density of verses and identifying irregularities or patterns, we can gain a deeper understanding of the overall structure of the psalms and the nuances of Syriac poetic forms. This approach, considering Syriac-specific syllable structures and phonological patterns, allows for a comprehensive insight into the artistry of the translator and the unique characteristics of Syriac psalmody.

The following is an example from the first strophe of Ps 96, which serves as an illustration of the quantitative analysis used in this study. Syllables and words are counted both in separate cola and in whole vers

es. In this way, the quantitative characteristics of verses can be compared to each other, and a possible quantitative balance can be tracked, such as the equal syllable number 8+8 in v. 2.

Verses	Words	Words in verses	Syllables	Syllables in verses	Colometry	
1a	4	8	9	17	20	ܡܫܬܐ ܠܝܬܝܢ ܠܚܝܬܐ ܕܡܝܬܐ.
b	4		8		17	ܕܝܬܐ ܕܡܝܬܐ ܕܡܝܬܐ.
2a	4	9	8	16	18	ܕܝܬܐ ܕܡܝܬܐ ܕܡܝܬܐ.
b	5		8		19	ܕܝܬܐ ܕܡܝܬܐ ܕܡܝܬܐ.
3a	3	6	8	15	16	ܕܝܬܐ ܕܡܝܬܐ ܕܡܝܬܐ.
b	3		7		17	ܕܝܬܐ ܕܡܝܬܐ ܕܡܝܬܐ.

¹⁵⁰ The quantitative dimensions of this inquiry will be discussed in the following sub-chapter.

6.8. Comparative framework

Throughout the analysis, a comparative framework will be maintained, consistently referencing the Biblical Hebrew approach while acknowledging the unique features of Syriac poetry. This means:

- a) each poetic device or structural element will be examined in both its Hebrew and Syriac contexts;
- b) similarities and differences in how these devices function in each version will be highlighted;
- c) the analysis will consider how translation from Hebrew to Syriac may have affected the poetic structure;
- d) unique features of Syriac poetry will be acknowledged and integrated into the analysis.

While the Biblical Hebrew approach serves as the foundation for this analysis, the methodology will remain flexible to accommodate the unique characteristics of Syriac poetry. This may involve:

- a) modifying analytical categories to better suit Syriac linguistic and literary conventions;
- b) introducing new categories or subcategories specific to Syriac poetry;
- c) adjusting the relative importance of specific poetic devices based on their prevalence in Syriac texts.

7. Syriac metrics

7.1. Analysis of Syriac metrics

Syriac literature has always been characterised by poetry. Syriac poetry has a rich history, spanning centuries and boasting some of the most notable works in the genre. According to the outline of Syriac poetry, Syriac metre is based primarily on the number of syllables in each line; stress patterns have sometimes been suggested, but it has never been conclusively proven. The evidence produced to support the claim that stress is an organising principle has not been convincing despite attempts made by several scholars in the past (notably Hölscher 1932).¹⁵¹ As Brock points out in his article in the *Oxford Handbook of Early Christian Studies*, scholars have discussed the syllable metre more frequently than stress: Anton Rhetor (Watt 1986), Jacob bar Shakkō (Martin 1879), and Yuhanon Dawlabani (Dawlabani 1970).¹⁵²

¹⁵¹ Brock 2008, 657. Sprengling provides a thorough overview of earlier theories (1915, 16: 145–167).

¹⁵² Ibid, 658.

Metric theory identifies two primary types of measurement in poetry: quantity and syllable count. Within syllable counting, there are two distinct approaches: homotony, which counts only accented syllables, and isosyllabism, which counts all syllables regardless of accentuation.¹⁵³ While the concept of metre in Syriac poetry is subject to debate, the isosyllabic metre is widely accepted as a defining characteristic of the tradition.¹⁵⁴

While acknowledging the prevalence of isosyllabism in Syriac poetry, scholars like Jeannin and Grimme highlight the frequent irregularities in syllable counts. Emereau stated that Syriac poetry adheres to the principle of isosyllabism and also follows a distinctive metric system that is quite unique.¹⁵⁵ However, Grimme questions the validity of syllable counting as a metric principle, suggesting it is merely a conventional component rather than a foundational metric principle.¹⁵⁶ Jeannin suggests that Bickell's strict adherence to isosyllabism might be more applicable to metrical homilies, which were recited rather than sung and, therefore, potentially subject to stricter metrical rules. Besides, he states Grimme's homotony assertion that scarcely any Syriac poem adheres strictly to the required syllable count in all its verses appears exaggerated.¹⁵⁷ However, Grimme accurately highlighted the prevalent irregularity in the syllable counts within Syriac poetry.¹⁵⁸

Despite these irregularities, analysing syllable patterns, alongside word counts and colometry, remains crucial for understanding the intricacies and artistry of Syriac poetry in this study.

There are two main categories of poems in the classical Syriac tradition:

1. *Memra* (narrative poetry), where syllables are formed in couplets of similar length; there are three types of metres: 5-syllable metre, which is traditionally associated with Balai, 7-syllable which is usually associated with Ephrem, and Ya'qub of Serugh's metre consisting of 4+4+4 syllables each line (12-syllable). Some metres, such as 6+6 and 8+8, are less common in the meantime. In the case

¹⁵³ Hage 1987, 26.

¹⁵⁴ Jeannin (2009, 58–65) provides a summary of the arguments made by advocates of this method, such as Bickell and Emereau. Rodrigues Pereira (1997, 108) states that as the metrical pattern becomes more regular and the accentual type more predominant, the metre approaches isosyllabism. This has been a defining characteristic of Syriac poetry since the 2nd century B.C.E. Brock (1985, 78–79) states that isosyllabism, a fundamental aspect of Semitic poetry, could be very ancient. It might be present in the Carpentras stele, a funerary inscription. Additionally, recent studies suggest that syllable count is significant in early Hebrew poetry. Stevenson (2015, 12) holds that as Syriac poetry shifted from oral to written composition, authors increasingly focused on creating intricate syntactic structures while reducing metre to a mere syllable count.

¹⁵⁵ Emereau 2011, 75.

¹⁵⁶ Grimme 1893, 277–279.

¹⁵⁷ Jeannin 1924, 58–65.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.* For a comprehensive understanding of scholars' viewpoints on accentuation and metrical Syriac poetry, it is recommended to consult the works of Hölscher and Jeannin.

of *memre*, they were likely recited rather than sung, even though the term *memra* is commonly rendered as a song.¹⁵⁹ They are metrically arranged couplets without any stanza divisions.¹⁶⁰

2. It is important to note that *madrashē* shares the same syllabic pattern as stanzaic poetry (*mšūḥtā*). The stanzaic poetry of this type demonstrates patterns such as simple (e.g., 5+5+5+5+5 syllables) and complex (e.g., 5+6 7+4 4+4 4+5).¹⁶¹ One essential characteristic of the *madrasha* structure, which has been acknowledged for a considerable time, is the *qālā*, or phonological metre. This metre entails the enumeration of syllables within each line and half-line. Distinctively, each metre possesses a unique Syriac name, originating from the initial words of a specific *madrasha* that employs that particular metre. This metre title is then positioned as a header preceding each *madrasha*.¹⁶²

Classical Syriac poetry, notably its isosyllabic metrical patterns from the 4th century onwards, benefits from syllabic balance, which is an essential element in determining the strophic structure. These verses possess the flexibility to either exist independently or form part of larger blocks, e.g., strophes, a more prevalent practice in hymns comprising verses with five or seven syllables. Typically, a strophe encompasses verses of uniform length, though occasionally, the initial or final verse may deviate in metre from the rest of the strophe. Consistently, all strophes within a hymn adhere to a consistent structural framework.

7.2. Early Syriac vocalisation: reconstructing syllable counts in classical Syriac poetry

The current study fully recognises that etymologically short vowels have fallen away in unstressed open syllables. Therefore, in this sub-section, the reconstructed Early Syriac vocalisation is experimentally used to investigate to what extent the syllable count might be different compared to the classical Syriac vocalisation.

There were a number of changes in Syriac before it entered the classical Syriac period. A few early inscriptions have survived, which demonstrate some ancient linguistic forms.¹⁶³ Several Early Syriac characteristics are revealed in the early

¹⁵⁹ In some dictionaries and encyclopaedias, the following interpretations of the term *memre* can be found: 1. Kiraz et al. (2011): the *memre* is a narrative poem characterised by the consistent usage of couplets, all adhering to a uniform syllabic metre. 2. In the entry dedicated to *mimrā* in his work, Sokoloff (2002, 670) expounds upon the meaning of *memrā*, elucidating that it encompasses several forms of expression “utterance, tradition, command; a written document, speech, sermon, and treatise.” 3. Johnson (2020, 194) construes *memre* as the verse homily.

¹⁶⁰ Stevenson 2015, 1.

¹⁶¹ Brock 2008, 657–671.

¹⁶² Stevenson 2015, 1.

¹⁶³ Knudsen 2015, 35.

inscriptions, some of which are relevant for our purposes, indicating significant differences. As a point of clarification, the reconstruction is not definitive and comes with some uncertainties. Accordingly, Beyer argues that since it is unclear if the features of West Syriac or East Syriac are recent and the vocalisations differ, this reconstruction cannot be guaranteed to be reliable.¹⁶⁴ For example, in West Syriac, the vowel /a/ tends to be pronounced as [ɔ], while in East Syriac it is pronounced as [a]. This means that a reconstructed vowel system based on West Syriac may give a different picture of Old Syriac than one based on East Syriac. Given this uncertainty, Beyer suggests that any reconstruction of the vowel system of Old Syriac should be treated with caution and viewed as a working hypothesis rather than an established fact.¹⁶⁵

Short vowels in unstressed open syllables are generally reduced. There have been three stages to the change. According to Beyer, the reduction of unstressed short vowels in open syllables can be traced back to the first half of the third century AD.¹⁶⁶ In open syllables, it is common practice to delete the vowels /a/, /e/ and /o/ if they appear unaccented.¹⁶⁷ Specific rules govern the process of vowel reduction. It is assumed that there has been a complete drop of all final vowels that follow the original accented syllable. It took place regarding *ā* even before the standardisation of orthography. Nöldeke brings a few examples: “thus ܐܠܢܐ from *lānā* “to us”; ܐܢܬܐ from *ā(n)tā* “thou”; ܡܠܟܐ from *qēṭāltā* “hast killed,” (but ܡܠܟܐ *malkā* “king,” &c.).”¹⁶⁸ Other final vowels have also disappeared at an early date without leaving any trace behind. However, many vowels of this kind are still written in consonantal form despite not being pronounced even in the oldest literary period (ca. 200 A.D.) and are omitted from punctuation. The hymns of Bardaisan are also notable for neglecting them in terms of syllable counting.¹⁶⁹

Building on this, specific patterns can be observed in the placement of vowels in various forms: the vowel of the plural *ū* in the perfect and imperative placed after the consonant “ܡܠܟܐ *qēṭal* from *qēṭālū*”; the suffix of the first singular *ī* after consonants “ܡܠܟܐ *malk* “my king” from *malkī*”; *ī* suffix of the 3rd masculine singular ,ܐ with the

¹⁶⁴ Beyer 1984, 37. Kaufmann (1984, 94) proposes that short vowels in open unstressed syllables began to disappear at the time of the Achaemenids.

¹⁶⁵ The phenomenon of consonant doubling in Syriac, characterised by significant differences between West Syrians and East Syrians, is a complex linguistic issue. While the West Syrians largely abandoned consonant doubling, the East Syrians have generally preserved it, with variations depending on phonological and historical factors. This intricate topic, involving patterns of vowel influence, guttural consonants, and historical simplifications, is undoubtedly relevant to Syriac linguistic studies. However, due to its complexity and the specific focus of this study, it will not be addressed in detail here. For more information on the doubling of consonants in Syriac, see Nöldeke 1904, 13–14.

¹⁶⁶ Beyer 1977, 649–653; 1990, 237.

¹⁶⁷ Muraoka 2005, 10; 2013, 12; Nöldeke 1904, 36.

¹⁶⁸ Nöldeke 1904, 35.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid.

noun: ܡܠܟܐܝܗ *malkau* from *malkauhī* “his kings”. It is also appropriate to add *ī* of the 2nd fem. sing. in ܐܢܬܝ at from a(n)tī “thou” (f.); ܡܠܟܝܗ *malkēkh* from *malkēkhī* (both with *ē*?); ܡܠܟܝܗ; ܡܠܟܝܗ; ܡܠܟܝܗ; ܡܠܟܝܗ, &c.”¹⁷⁰ According to Beyer, the deletion of the early Syriac vowels of ܐ and ܝ, occurred in the fifth century.¹⁷¹ A case in point, the early reconstruction of ܐ for the word *qdm* / *qdām*/ ‘before’ would be *qwdam* / *qodām*, demonstrating the deletion of the vowel.

Presented below are tables that illustrate the vocalisation of the words according to Early Syriac vocalisation versus classical Syriac vocalisation, along with the number of syllables for each.

The first strophe of Ps 148, representing transliteration according to classical Syriac vocalisation, is the following:

Verses	Syllables	Transliteration according to classical Syriac vocalisation	
1a	7	<i>Šab/baḥ/ lmār/yā/ men/ šmay/yā</i>	ܫܒܒܐ ܠܡܪܝܐ ܡܢ ܫܡܝܐ
b	5	<i>Šab/ḥuy/ bam/raw/mē</i>	ܫܒܚܝܐ ܒܡܪܐܡܐ
2a	7	<i>Šab/ḥuy/ kol/hōn/ ma/la/kāw</i>	ܫܒܚܝܐ ܕܟܠܗܝܢ ܡܠܐܟܐܝܗ
b	8	<i>Šab/ḥuy/ kol/hōn /ḥay/la/wā/tēh</i>	ܫܒܚܝܐ ܕܟܠܗܝܢ ܗܝܠܐܝܗ
3a	6	<i>Šab/ḥuy/ šem/šā/ wsah/rā</i>	ܫܒܚܝܐ ܫܡܫܐܝܗ ܡܫܚܝܐ
b	7	<i>Šab/ḥuy/ kol/ kaw/kḥē/ wnuh/rā</i>	ܫܒܚܝܐ ܕܟܠܗܝܢ ܕܡܫܚܝܐ
4a	5	<i>Šab/ḥuy/ šmay/ šmay/yā</i>	ܫܒܚܝܐ ܫܡܝܐܝܗ
b	7	<i>May/yā/ dal/’el/ men/ šmay/yā</i>	ܡܝܝܐ ܕܠܐܝܠܐ ܡܢ ܫܡܝܐܝܗ

The first strophe of Ps 148 with transliteration according to reconstructed early Syriac vocalisation is the following:

Verses	Syllables	Transliteration according to reconstructed early Syriac vocalisation	
1a	10	<i>Šab/ba/ḥū/ le/mār/yā/ men/ še/ma/yā</i>	ܫܒܒܐ ܠܡܪܝܐ ܡܢ ܫܡܝܐܝܗ
b	8	<i>Šab/ba/ḥū/hī/ ba/ma/ raw /mē</i>	ܫܒܚܝܐ ܒܡܪܐܡܐ
2a	11	<i>Šab/ba/ḥū/hī/ kol/lv/hōn /ma/la/kaw/hī</i>	ܫܒܚܝܐ ܕܟܠܗܝܢ ܡܠܐܟܐܝܗ
b	12	<i>Šab/ba/ḥū/hī/kol/lv/hōn / ḥa/ya/la/wā/ tēh</i>	ܫܒܚܝܐ ܕܟܠܗܝܢ ܗܝܠܐܝܗ
3a	9	<i>Šab/ba/ḥū/hī/šē/ma/ wa/sah/rā</i>	ܫܒܚܝܐ ܫܡܫܐܝܗ ܡܫܚܝܐ
b	11	<i>Šab/ba/ḥū/hī/ kol / kaw/ka/hē/ wa/nuh/rā</i>	ܫܒܚܝܐ ܕܟܠܗܝܢ ܕܡܫܚܝܐ
4a	9	<i>Šab/ba/ḥū/hī/ še/may /še/may/yā</i>	ܫܒܚܝܐ ܫܡܝܐܝܗ
b	9	<i>May/yā/ da/la/’el/ men/ še/may/yā</i>	ܡܝܝܐ ܕܠܐܝܠܐ ܡܢ ܫܡܝܐܝܗ

¹⁷⁰ Ibid, see more examples by Muraoka 2005, 10.

¹⁷¹ Beyer 1990, 245.

The first strophe of Ps 29, transliterated according to classical Syriac vocalisation, is the following:

Verses	Syllables	Transliteration according to classical Syriac vocalisation	
1a	7	'ay/taw/lmār/yā/ ḥnay/ dek/rē	ܐܝܬܐܠܡܐܪܝܐ ܚܢܝܐ ܕܝܬܐܪܝܐ
b	9	'ay/taw/lmār/yā/ šuḥ/hā /wi/qā/rā	ܐܝܬܐܠܡܐܪܝܐ ܫܘܚܗܐ ܘܝܩܐܪܐ
2a	9	'ay/taw/lmār/yā/ 'i/qā/rā/ laš/mēh	ܐܝܬܐܠܡܐܪܝܐ ܝܩܐܪܐ ܠܫܡܝܗ
b	7	syod/ lmār/yā/ ḥdār/tā /dqud/šēh	ܣܝܕܐܠܡܐܪܝܐ ܚܕܐܪܬܐ ܕܩܘܕܫܝܗ

The same strophe from Ps 29 with transliteration according to reconstructed early Syriac vocalisation is the following:

Verses	Syllables	Transliteration according to reconstructed early Syriac vocalisation	
1a	10	'ay/taw/ la/mār/yā/ ḥa/nai/ dv/ky/rē	ܐܝܬܐܠܡܐܪܝܐ ܚܢܝܐ ܕܝܬܐܪܝܐ
b	12	'ay/taw/ le/mār/yā/ šuḥe/hā/ wa/ya/qā/rā	ܐܝܬܐܠܡܐܪܝܐ ܫܘܚܗܐ ܘܝܩܐܪܐ
2a	11	'ay/taw/ le/mār/yā/ ya/qā/rā/ la/še/mēh	ܐܝܬܐܠܡܐܪܝܐ ܝܩܐܪܐ ܠܫܡܝܗ
b	11	S(e)yo/ḏū /la/mār/yā/ ḥa/ḏār/tā /ḏa/quḏ/šēh	ܣܝܕܐܠܡܐܪܝܐ ܚܕܐܪܬܐ ܕܩܘܕܫܝܗ

This comparative analysis shows the extent to which the reconstructed vocalisation affects the number of syllables. According to the reconstructed Early Syriac vocalisation in Ps 148, the syllable count ranges from 8 to 12, while the classical Syriac vocalisation ranges from 5 to 8. In addition, in Ps 29, the syllable count in the classical Syriac vocalisation ranges from 7 to 9, while it ranges from 10 to 12 in the reconstructed Early Syriac vocalisation. Therefore, from the reconstruction of the Early Syriac vocalisation of these two strophes, we can conclude that there is a significantly higher number of syllables than in classical Syriac. This suggests that there have been many changes to the vocalisation of the psalms over time, resulting in a more complex structure for the reconstructed Early Syriac. As can be seen in the tables, the syllable numbers 10–12 in Ps 29 and 8–12 in Ps 148 in the reconstructed Early Syriac vocalisation are significantly larger and closer to each other.

Nevertheless, since one of the objectives of the study is to find out whether there is a tendency to have a balanced length of cola or not, the analysis reveals that the syllable numbers in the reconstructed vocalisation are slightly closer to each other and more balanced than in the classical vocalisation. This would strengthen the argument that there is a tendency to have cola with a certain balance in the strophes. Furthermore, both types of vocalisations contribute to the achievement of balance. Because both vocalisation types reflect an approximately similar degree of balance, and furthermore, their differences are not that large, this study has opted to remain at the classical Syriac vocalisation.

8. General overview of methodology

In a general overview, the methodology for studying Psalms 8, 19, 29, 86, 96, 120, 124, 146, and the non-canonical 155 encompasses the following approaches, which have already been elaborated on in previous sections.

The initial stage of the study involves gathering general information on each psalm. This includes information on historical context, theological themes, and relevant psalmic traditions.

The Syriac version of each psalm is presented according to its strophic structure. An English translation of the Syriac text follows this. The strophic structure of the Syriac text is determined through the analysis of formal elements, parallelism, repetition, and structural patterns. Similarly, the Hebrew text is presented, along with an English translation, and its strophic structure is also analysed in the same way.

The study begins with the Syriac psalms because the focus of this study is on exploring the Syriac version and its distinctive features. Starting with the Syriac text allows the investigation first to highlight its strophic structure and unique characteristics, which then provides a solid foundation for comparing it to the Hebrew text. This approach helps better understand how the Syriac version interprets or adapts the Hebrew original.

If there are textual variations present in both the P-Ps and MT, which have an impact on the poetic devices and arrangements, these are noted and analysed. This study occasionally examines how textual variants in the psalms may affect their poetic devices and meaning. This sporadic analysis offers insights into the textual transmission process and deepens our understanding of likely poetic features in these ancient texts.

Building on a strophic foundation, the methodology involves examining stylistic features. In both texts, the study analyses word repetition, a prominent poetic device, by documenting and comparing the frequencies of repeated words to uncover patterns of emphasis and thematic focus. This analysis helps shed light on the rhetorical strategies employed in the psalms.

Our study examines the use of sound devices, including alliteration and dominant sounds, in both Syriac and Hebrew poetry. This investigation emphasises the poetic and mnemonic qualities inherent in these literary works.

Parallelism and syntactic structures are briefly discussed to emphasise their influence on the meaning and flow of the psalms.

The following section performs a comprehensive analysis of various quantitative aspects to better grasp the structural differences between the two texts. This entails quantifying the number of words, syllables, and consonants per colon, verse, and strophe in both the Syriac and Hebrew texts. Subsequently, the data is tabulated and compared, which unveils patterns of variation in the length and rhythm of the poetic lines.

The summary at the end of each chapter provides an analysis of the Syriac and Hebrew texts, emphasising the significance of the similarities and differences observed. The primary objective is to underscore the importance of the findings.

In essence, the methodology employed in this study to analyse the process of translating poetry and poetic figures from Hebrew into Syriac is fundamentally comparative. The focus is on elucidating the disparities between the psalms in P-Ps and MT. This approach entails organising the psalms in a verse-by-verse comparison, aiming to shed light on both poetic aspects and its poetic translation technique.

9. Terminology

As there is a lack of scholarly consensus on poetic terms, this study will attempt to define the terms as simply as possible and as precisely as needed; definitions are mainly based on Watson's (1984) view, occasionally on the suggestions of Nõmmik (2012), Berlin (2008), and others.

Acrostic: a series of lines that follow the order of the alphabet in the poem.¹⁷²

Alliteration: the repetition of initial consonants, which are the same or similar in verses, strophes or poems.¹⁷³

Balanced: the cola of the verse have a similar colometrical length. In terms of consonants, this means that the difference between cola should not exceed three consonants.¹⁷⁴

Bicolon: a verse of two cola, which are usually related to each other.

Chiasmus: a series of structures such as (a, b, c...) and their inverses such as (...c, b, a), which together form a combined unit.¹⁷⁵

Closure: termination of a poem or strophe with a particular pattern.¹⁷⁶

Colometry: measuring the length of cola by counting consonants used in a verse.¹⁷⁷

Dominant sound: a sound that can be repeated in any position.¹⁷⁸

Ellipsis: the lack of an element in a poem expected to be repeated.¹⁷⁹

¹⁷² Watson 1984, 190; 1994, 17.

¹⁷³ Watson 1984, 225. Watson distinguishes between consonant alliteration and vowel alliteration. It should be mentioned that alliteration is not considered in this study in its entirety, as Watson thinks, but only the initial and the same or similar consonants of the word. Moreover, Margalit (1979, 57–80) considers two types of alliteration, including constitutive and ornamental alliteration, the first being a must in poetry and the second not. Alonso Schökel (1988, 22) defines it as a consonantal sound repeated at the beginning of words.

¹⁷⁴ Nõmmik (2012, 402), according to observations from the Ancient Hebrew poetry.

¹⁷⁵ Watson 1984, 201; 1994, 17.

¹⁷⁶ Cf. Watson 1984, 63.

¹⁷⁷ Loretz and Kottsieper (1987, 24) regard colometry as a device for delimiting the smallest poetic members or elements called cola.

¹⁷⁸ Alonso Schökel 1988, 25.

¹⁷⁹ Watson 1984, 152. He believes, of course, that it can also be applied to the "two-line staircase parallelism". Moreover, Greenfield (1971, 140) defines it in such a way that the presence of one or more omitted forms in a sentence or clause is essential in relation to the context, and their presence allows the context to show most of the meaning of the poetry.

Extrapolative verse: verse which is not synonymously parallel.¹⁸⁰

Heterosyllabic metre: different and unequal number of syllables in the cola of a verse.

Inclusion: the reiteration of the same phrase at the beginning and end of the verse, strophe, or poem. The poem is framed with two repeated sentences or phrases.¹⁸¹

Isosyllabic metre: the same number of syllables in the cola of a verse.

Monocolon: a single colon, which does not show particular coherency with other cola of the poem and is considered an “isolated line”.¹⁸²

Parallelism: similar linguistic elements and/or contrasts within or between words, phrases, cola, lines, or whole texts.¹⁸³

Qinah: a bicolon in Ancient Hebrew poetry in which the second colon is colometrically shorter, and the colometrical difference usually averages between 3–4 consonants.¹⁸⁴

Strophe: a series of verses (one or more) usually thematically and formally connected to each other.¹⁸⁵

Syllable: an element of maximum intensity in a chain of speech sounds.¹⁸⁶

Synonymous parallelism: a coincidence of statements in a verse that differ only in word choice but convey the same concept.¹⁸⁷

Tetracolon: a verse consisting of four cola connected to each other; a tetracolon sometimes can also be an independent strophe or poem.¹⁸⁸

Tricolon: a verse consisting of three cola, which are usually connected to each other.

Unbalanced: the number of consonants in parallel cola differs by more than three consonants from each other.¹⁸⁹

Verse: the most usual unit of poetry consisting of one to four cola, usually being a bicolon with synonymous parallelism.¹⁹⁰

Word repetition: keywords reiterated within a poetic unit.¹⁹¹

¹⁸⁰ Nömmik (2012, 402), who replaces the usual notion of “synthetic parallelism”.

¹⁸¹ Watson 1984, 292. Berlin (2008, 3) believes that this device should be called parallelism, since it occurs in the form that the first and last lines of a text contain repeated words and phrases.

¹⁸² Nömmik 2012, 405.

¹⁸³ Berlin 2008, 156.

¹⁸⁴ Nömmik 2012, 405.

¹⁸⁵ Cf. Ibid.

¹⁸⁶ Watson 1984, 90.

¹⁸⁷ Nömmik 2012, 402. Lowth (1847, 205.10) is of the opinion that they have the same sense but with different terms. Kugel (1981) is of the opinion that “one expresses the author’s thought twice in different ways”.

¹⁸⁸ Watson 1984, 185.

¹⁸⁹ Nömmik 2012, 402.

¹⁹⁰ Cf. Nömmik 2012, 405. Watson (1984, 168) defines it as a unit that is rhythmic, can be analysed and has the potential to be followed by other rhythmic units.

¹⁹¹ Watson 1984, 275.

CHAPTER TWO: PSALM 8

1. General information

Psalm 8 is a hymn glorifying God as a creator and the human being as a creation. The psalm is prone to be classified as a psalm of creation.¹⁹² Yet the creation is not praised, but the creator.¹⁹³ However, some scholars are of the opinion that the psalm is composed of hymnic material, wisdom material and lamentations.¹⁹⁴ The psalmist directly addresses God, which demonstrates the aspect of lamentation, while the question of “what is man” in v. 5 refers to wisdom literature.¹⁹⁵ Throughout the psalm, four main themes are developed: the majesty of God (vv. 2–3), human insignificance (4–5), the role of God in relation to humanity (6–9), and closing praise (8–10).¹⁹⁶

It should be mentioned that it is impossible to determine either the precise date of the psalm or its exact function since the content of the psalm does not help much.¹⁹⁷ Gunkel has suggested that the repetition of the opening verse in the end indicates the involvement of a chorus.¹⁹⁸

2. The text and strophic structure

2.1. The Syriac text

The text of Ps 8, according to the Leiden edition (1980) and its translation into English, is the following.¹⁹⁹ Roman numbers refer to the strophes, which will be explained below.

- | | | | |
|---|----|---|---------------------------------|
| I | 2a | O Lord, our Lord, how glorified is your name in all
the earth, | ܕܠܝܬ ܕܡܠܟܐ ܕܢܗܝܬ ܕܥܠܝܬ ܕܝܬ ܕܠܝܬ |
| | b | for you have set your glory above the heavens! | ܕܟܠܐ ܕܥܠܝܬ ܕܝܬ ܕܠܝܬ |
| | 3a | From the mouth of the youth and of children | ܕܡܝܢ ܕܦܝ ܕܝܬ ܕܠܝܬ |
| | b | you have established your glory. | ܕܥܠܝܬ ܕܝܬ ܕܠܝܬ |

¹⁹² Craigie 2004, 106; Anderson 1972, 100.

¹⁹³ Müller 1988, 35.

¹⁹⁴ Craigie 2004, 106; Kraus 1993, 179.

¹⁹⁵ Gerstenberger 1988, 68.

¹⁹⁶ Craigie 2004, 106.

¹⁹⁷ Mare (2006, 931) states that the content does not enable any dating of the psalm.

¹⁹⁸ Gunkel 1903, 208.

¹⁹⁹ The English translation is according to Taylor et al. (2020) but has been modified occasionally.

- II 3c Because of your enemies, ܐܠܗܐ ܕܠܝܠܝܢܝܐ.
d so that the enemy who takes vengeance might be ܕܠܝܠܝܢܝܐ ܕܠܝܠܝܢܝܐ ܕܠܝܠܝܢܝܐ.²⁰⁰
brought to naught.
- 4a For they have seen your heavens, the work of your fingers, ܐܠܗܐ ܕܝܠܝܢ ܕܝܠܝܢ ܕܝܠܝܢ.
b the moon and the stars that you have established. ܕܝܠܝܢ ܕܝܠܝܢ ܕܝܠܝܢ.
- III 5a What is man that you have remembered him, ܐܠܗܐ ܕܝܠܝܢ ܕܝܠܝܢܝܐ.
b or a human being, that you have cared for him? ܕܝܠܝܢ ܕܝܠܝܢܝܐ.
- 6a You made him a little less than the angels, ܕܝܠܝܢ ܕܝܠܝܢܝܐ ܕܝܠܝܢܝܐ.
b you crowned him with honour and glory. ܕܝܠܝܢ ܕܝܠܝܢܝܐ ܕܝܠܝܢܝܐ.
- 7a You gave him authority over the work of your hands, ܕܝܠܝܢ ܕܝܠܝܢܝܐ ܕܝܠܝܢܝܐ.
b you placed everything under his feet. ܕܝܠܝܢ ܕܝܠܝܢܝܐ ܕܝܠܝܢܝܐ.
- IV 8a All sheep and cattle, ܕܝܠܝܢ ܕܝܠܝܢܝܐ.
b even the animals of the fields; the birds that are in the sky, ܕܝܠܝܢ ܕܝܠܝܢܝܐ ܕܝܠܝܢܝܐ.
9 and the fish of the sea that travel along in the paths of seas. ܕܝܠܝܢ ܕܝܠܝܢܝܐ ܕܝܠܝܢܝܐ.
- V 10 O Lord, our Lord, how glorious is your name in all ܕܝܠܝܢ ܕܝܠܝܢܝܐ ܕܝܠܝܢܝܐ.
the earth!

Despite the absence of explicit strophic markers in extant Syriac manuscripts of P-Ps, this study proposes adopting a strophic structure to enhance our understanding of the psalm's poetic nature and facilitate more effective comparative analyses. Through careful examination of linguistic, thematic, and structural elements, five distinct strophes (2–3b, 3c–4, 5–7, 8–9, 10) can be discerned in the Syriac version of Ps 8.

The first strophe (vv. 2–3b) is characterised by several notable features contributing to its cohesion and demarcation. Primarily, it is distinguished by the speaker's direct address to God, establishing an intimate tone that sets it apart from subsequent sections. A significant linguistic marker is the triple repetition of the word root ܥܕܕ 'to glorify / glory' (2a, 2b, 3b). This repetition serves a dual purpose: it creates a semantic emphasis on the theme of divine glorification and forms an inclusion that frames the verses into a cohesive strophic unit. The strophe's phonetic texture is enriched by the six-fold repetition of the consonant ܥ, generating an alliterative pattern that underscores the strophe's unity. Furthermore, the nine-fold occurrence of the consonant ܢ creates an additional layer of phonetic cohesion, binding the verses together and enhancing the strophe's distinctiveness.

²⁰⁰ Given the readings of manuscripts 6tI, 8tI, 9aI, 9t2c, 10t2.4, and 12t3.4.7 in the critical apparatus of the Leiden edition (1980, 6), it is suggested that it is appropriate to read ܐ before ܕܝܠܝܢ in this context.

The second strophe (vv. 3c–4) is delineated by both lexical and thematic elements. The repetition of **כִּי** ‘because’ (3c, 4a) serves as a connective device, linking the verses syntactically and logically. On the other hand, v. 4b applies the verb **קִמַּמְתָּ** ‘you established’ at the end of the strophe, similarly to the first strophe (v. 3b). The plural verb **רָאוּ** ‘they saw’ (4a) creates a grammatical connection to the enemies mentioned in v. 3c, establishing a continuity of subject. Beyond these poetic markers, the strophe is unified by its semantic and thematic content, focusing on God’s miraculous power. It juxtaposes the strength gained from the mouths of infants with the celestial works of the divine finger (heaven, moon, and stars), creating a compelling contrast between the mundane and the cosmic manifestations of divine power.

Verses 5–7 constitute the third strophe, marked by several distinctive features. The strophe opens with an interrogative, which serves as a strong strophic marker by introducing a shift in subject matter. This rhetorical question effectively separates these verses from the preceding content. Thematically, this strophe is cohesively focused on the position of humans within creation, exploring the theological anthropology implicit in the psalm. A notable linguistic feature is the consistent application of the pronominal direct object **אֲנִי** in each colon (with a slight variation in 7b). This repetitive pronominal structure contributes to the strophe’s coherent poetics and emphasises the direct relationship between God and humanity.

The fourth strophe (vv. 8–9) is distinguished by its unique content and structure. It features a remarkable list of word pairs, including sheep and cattle, field animals, birds of the sky, and sea fishes. This cataloguing technique not only provides a comprehensive view of creation but also serves to demarcate this strophe as a distinct unit within the psalm. The use of nominal clauses in these verses contributes to their stylistic unity. Thematically and semantically, these verses are tightly interconnected, presenting a panoramic view of human dominion over creation.

The fifth strophe, consisting solely of v. 10, functions as a frame for the entire psalm by repeating the content of v. 2. This structural device, known as inclusion, serves to encapsulate the psalm’s message and provides a sense of closure.

As for the strophic form, Ps 8 contains four cola in the first and second strophes, six cola in the third strophe, three cola in the fourth strophe, and a monocolon in the fifth strophe.

2.2. The Hebrew text

The Hebrew MT text of Ps 8 and its English translation are the following:²⁰¹

I	2a	O Yhwh, our Lord,	יהוה אדנינו
	b	how majestic is your name in all the earth,	מה אדיר שמך בכל הארץ

²⁰¹ Regarding the English translation of the Hebrew text, I acknowledge the assistance of Bible.org, with the ESV, LSB, and NABRE being particularly helpful for my work.

II	2c	you who <u>have displayed</u> your splendour above the heavens!	אשר נתתה הודך על השמים
	3a	From the mouth of infants and babes ²⁰²	מפי עוללים וינקים
	b	you have established strength because of your adversaries,	יסדת עז למען צורריך
	c	to make the enemy and the revengeful cease.	להשבית אויב ומתנקם
III	4a	When I consider your heavens, the work of your fingers,	כי אראה שמיך מעשי אצבעתיך
	b	the moon and the stars, which you have stablished.	ירח וכוכבים אשר כוננתה
	5a	What is man that you take thought of him,	מה אנוש כי תזכרנו
	b	and the son of man that you care for him?	ובן אדם כי תפקדנו
IV	6a	Yet you have made him a little lower than God	ותחסרתהו מעט מאלהים
	b	and you crown him with glory and majesty!	וכבוד והדר תעטררהו
	7a	You make him to rule over the works of your hands,	תמשילהו במעשי ידיך
	b	you have put all things under his feet.	כל שתה תחת רגליו
V	8a	All sheep and oxen,	צנה ואלפים כלם
	b	and also, the beasts of the field;	וגם בהמות שדי
	9a	the birds of the heavens and the fish of the sea,	צפור שמים ודגי הים
	b	whatever passes through the paths of the seas.	עבר ארחות ימים
VI	10a	O Yhwh, our Lord,	יהוה אדנינו
	b	how majestic is your name in all the earth!	מה אדיר שמך בכל הארץ

It is evident that in colon 2c, the verb תנה is corrupt, since ‘which, give’ (imperative) is neither syntactically nor meaningfully possible, and the easiest way to emend the word is to follow BHS and others and to read נתתה.²⁰³ Other suggestions to emend have been to interpret the verb through Ugaritic *tny*,²⁰⁴ to read the two words as one word (אשרתנה) being a Piel form imperfect שרת ‘to minister, serve.’²⁰⁵ However, Butterwieser and Baethgen hold the view that this is not corrupt

²⁰² Eaton’s viewpoint (2003, 81) is that “the context suggests that these ‘babes’ are the weak and humble worshippers; whose inadequate singing of God’s glory is yet used by him to still the avenger.” It seems to Dahood (1965, 49) that the psalmist is so astonished how much God’s name is glory, and he babbles like an infant. Vos and Olivier (2002, 1437) take the view that infants and kids’ representation for the enduring and disdained individuals of God, but a reference to those who affirm of God’s power. Kraus (1993, 182) ascribes it to the wisdom literature and holds the assumption that the poet decides to point out to the fact that the power of foes is ruined by the voice of weak children.

²⁰³ So do Oesterley 1962, 140; Kraus 1978, 66; DeClaissé-Walford et al. 2014, 121; Duhm 1922, 34; Baethgen 1904, 20; Cheyne 1904, 26. Similarly, Taylor et al. (2020, 23), in their Peshitta translation, state that the verb “set” in MT is perplexing to explain and is likely corrupt. It seems that the Syriac text is more understandable.

²⁰⁴ Soggin 1971, 566–568. Donner (1967, 324–327) rejected the proposal.

²⁰⁵ Dahood 1965, 49; Craigie 2004, 105.

and find it correct with Symmachus, Hieronymus, and P-Ps, as an infinitive, *prae* verb, but in passive, not active.²⁰⁶ Terrien opposes that the exact meaning of the verb is not certain here and takes *אשר* as a relative pronoun connecting *שמך* ‘your name’ (v. 2b) with the verb “you have set” (v. 2c), or else a causative conjunction, “because” and thus “distinguishes the first strophe from strophe 2.” Compared to Judges 5:11, it could be a form of the verb *tnh* II, ‘to tell, narrate’. As the Greek version translates, “Your name is to be admired in the whole earth, because Your majesty is exalted above the heavens,” it seems to have read the same consonants with different vowel sounds.²⁰⁷

For the word *מים* ‘the seas’ in v. 9, a change to *מים* ‘water’ has been suggested.²⁰⁸ Yet, there is no need to change, and the colometry is also logical.

This study proposes a strophic structure for the Hebrew psalm despite the absence of explicit scribal markers in the manuscripts. We will suggest six strophes in vv. 2ab, 2c–3, 4–5, 6–7, 8–9 and 10.²⁰⁹

Psalm 8 demonstrates a sophisticated structural organisation that reflects its thematic depth and poetic artistry. The psalm’s framework is characterised by an encompassing element, with vv. 2a–b and 10, serving as bookends that enclose the poem’s core content found in vv. 2c–9. This structural envelope not only provides a thematic framework but also contributes to the psalm’s symmetry and cohesion.

The central portion of the psalm exhibits a notable symmetry, consisting of four strophes (2c–3, 4–5, 6–7 and 8–9), each composed of four cola. This consistent structure underscores the psalm’s carefully crafted nature. The thematic progression through these strophes reveals a thoughtful exploration of the relationship between God, humanity, and creation.

The psalm’s thematic shifts serve as primary strophic markers, guiding the reader through its theological landscape. The opening strophe (vv. 2a, b) establishes the psalm’s theme: the marvel of God and the majesty of His name. This is followed by the second strophe (vv. 2c–3), which expands on God’s majesty, shifting the focus to His cosmic grandeur. The third strophe (vv. 4–5) introduces a contemplative element, juxtaposing human frailty with the wonder of God’s creation.

²⁰⁶ Buttenwieser 1938, 180; Baethgen 1904, 21.

²⁰⁷ Terrien 2003, 128.

²⁰⁸ Kraus 1978, 66.

²⁰⁹ Van der Lugt (2006, 143) divides the psalm into vv. 2–5, 6–10; Fokkelman (2000, 69) and Terrien (2000, 124) vv. 2ab, 2c–3, 4–5, 6–7, 8–9, 10; Seybold (1996, 50–51) vv. 2a, 2b–4, 5–9, 10.

Van der Lugt (2006, 143) presents additional strophic structures identified by various scholars. Köster (1837) vv. 2–3, 4–6, 7–9, 10; de Wette (1856) vv. 2–3, 4–9, 10; Ley (1887) vv. 2–3, 4–6, 9–10; Schlottman (1885), Jacquet (1975), Beaucamp (1976) and Weber (2001) vv. 2a–b, 2c–3, 4–5, 6–7, 8–9, 10; Delitzsch (1894) and Craigie (1983) vv. 2–3, 4–5, 6–9, 10; Zenner (1906) vv. 2–5, 6–10; Kittel (1929) vv. 2–3, 4–5, 6–7, 8–9, 10; Kissane (1953) vv. 2–3, 4–7a, 7b–10; Koole (1966) vv. 2a–b, 2c–4, 5–9, 10; Ravasi (1985) vv. 2a–b, 2c–5, 6–9, 10; Girard (1996) vv. 2a–b, 2c–3, 4–6, 7–9, 10.

This strophe employs an interrogative-responsive format, posing a question that is then addressed in the subsequent vv. 6–7, which form the fourth strophe. This central question-answer structure adds a dialogic element to the psalm, enhancing its rhetorical impact.

The fourth strophe (vv. 6–7) marks a significant thematic shift, focusing on humanity's exalted status in God's eyes. This strophe is particularly notable for its use of transitive verbs in the past tense, all referring to God as the subject. This grammatical choice emphasises divine agency and the deliberate nature of God's actions towards humanity. The fifth strophe (vv. 8–9) further develops this theme, highlighting humanity's dominion over creation, as exemplified by the service of animals to humankind.

The psalm's structure is further reinforced by the presence of collective elements in the second and third strophes (vv. 2c–3 and 4–5). These collective themes, along with the subsequent expressions of divine action and renewed praise, contribute to the definition of strophic boundaries and the overall thematic progression of the psalm.

In addition to the previously discussed structural elements, Ps 8 employs various linguistic and stylistic devices that serve as strophic markers, further delineating the poem's organisation. The first strophe is distinguished by a three-fold *ס*-alliteration, which not only enhances its phonetic quality but also marks it as a distinct unit.

In the second strophe, the repeated use of *ס* and *פ* (occurring five times) creates a strong phonetic link between the verses, reinforcing their unity. The third strophe is characterised by a three-fold repetition of the particle *כִּי* in cola 4a, 5a and 5b, binding these verses more tightly together. The continued alternation of *ס*- and *פ*-sounds further underscores this cohesion.

The fourth strophe stands out due to its consistent grammatical structure and use of synonymous parallelism, creating a rhythmic and semantic unity. Finally, the fifth strophe (vv. 8–9) is emphasised through a list of word pairs, including sheep and cattle, field animals, birds of the sky, and fish of the sea. This cataloguing technique not only provides a comprehensive view of creation but also serves to demarcate this strophe as a distinct unit within the psalm.

Verses 8 and 9 are also linked by their shared use of appositional noun phrases in the syntax, as well as their focus on animal imagery. These varied linguistic and stylistic features, working in concert with the thematic shifts and structural elements, create a multi-layered system of strophic markers contributing to the psalm's sophisticated and cohesive structure.²¹⁰

²¹⁰ Fokkelman (2000, 69–71) uses a combination of thematic development, structural features (like question-answer), and quantitative patterns (syllable count) to demarcate strophes in Ps 8. Terrien (2003, 126) proposes a highly symmetrical structure for Ps 8. He suggests the psalm comprises four tetracola, each with four cola and a relatively consistent metre. These quatrains are enveloped by a prelude and an identical postlude, emphasising the theology of the divine name. Terrien argues that the first colon of the initial strophe (v. 2c in most translations) should be considered part of the first tetracolon rather than the prelude, maintaining the poem's regularity. He

3. Word repetition and sound figures

A quick survey of the vocabulary of the psalm reveals that the Syriac translator often replaces Hebrew synonyms with one and the same Syriac word. This clearly increases the intensity of word repetition. So ܡܠܟܐ ‘because’ in vv. 3 and 4 translates ܠܡܥܢ and ܕܝ; ܚܕܝܐ ‘enemy’ in v. 3 stands for ܥܕܝܐ and ܕܝܠܝܐ; ܐܡܨܐ ‘you established’ in vv. 3 and 4 for ܝܨܕܬܐ and ܕܝܢܬܐ. The Syriac text substitutes various Hebrew words with the same repeated term, resulting in a striking abundance of word repetition that is entirely absent in the Hebrew version.

Another instance is the address of the psalm ܕܝܗܘܐ in vv. 2 and 10 for ܝܗܘܐ, which is the only option for the translator to render the tetragrammaton. But everything else shies away if we notice the fivefold occurrence of the word root ܥܒܕ in the Syriac psalm. In the inclusion of the psalm, in vv. 2a and 10, it appears as a passive participle form of the D-stem ܥܒܕ ‘is glorified’ translating Hebrew ܐܕܝܪ; in vv. 2b and 6b, the noun ܥܒܕܐ ‘praise/glory/majesty’ renders ܗܕ and ܕܒܕ; in v. 3b, the noun ܥܒܕܐ transmits ܥܝ ‘strength.’ The phenomenon is definitively deliberate and aims at a more coherent text than the Hebrew text. For this reason, Ps 8 in Syriac indeed becomes “a psalm of praise.”

There are also instances of finding different equivalents for the Hebrew words, such as ܕܝܝܐ and ܕܡܐ, but the overall conclusion is clear that the Syriac translator applies more word repetition. The less intensive word repetition outside of the inclusion in vv. 2 and 10 in the Hebrew text coincides with the almost missing effect of word repetition in the strophic structure. The Syriac psalm is different. The address ܕܝܗܘܐ and the root ܥܒܕ strongly shape the first strophe, ܡܠܟܐ marks both halves of the second strophe, which has additionally ܚܕܝܐ twice in the first bicolon. The first and the second strophes have both ܐܡܨܐ ‘you established’ in their last colon (3b and 4b). Word repetition functions as a marker of two strophes in Syriac. This might serve as a stylistic answer to the syllabic and word symmetry in the second half of the psalm.

A further repetition of ܕܝܗܘܐ deserves mentioning since it repeats exactly the Hebrew usage of ܡܥܫܝ in vv. 4a and 7a but has much more the ambition of exact symmetry in P-Ps: the colon 4a is preceded by six cola, and the colon 7a is followed by six cola. Both occurrences belong to the penultimate cola of the second and third strophes. Verse 5, with its double and central rhetorical question, is located precisely between the inner frame of ܕܝܗܘܐ and between the outer frame of vv. 2a and 10. As seen, the Syriac translator renders two different Hebrew words ܝܨܕܬܐ and ܕܝܢܬܐ ‘they have established’ with a single word ܐܡܨܐ in vv. 3b and 4b. Likewise, this phenomenon occurs in v. 3, where the Syriac translator translates two different Hebrew words ܥܕܝܐ ‘your adversaries’ and ܕܝܠܝܐ ‘enemy’ with a single Syriac word ܚܕܝܐ. The indication manifests that the Syriac translator exhibits an appropriate

outlines the structure as follows: a prelude on the wonder of the Name (v. 2a–b), followed by four strophes addressing God’s majesty (vv. 2c–3), human fragility (vv. 4–5), human greatness (vv. 6–7), and the service of animals (vv. 8–9), concluding with a postlude echoing the prelude (v. 10).

selection of words based on contextual considerations, resulting in a heightened occurrence of word repetitions.

Van Peursen believes that the observed poetic pattern in the Syriac translation can be interpreted through two complementary lenses. From a translation studies perspective, this phenomenon reflects a tendency to homogenise vocabulary across extended textual segments. This approach to translation results in a more uniform lexical landscape throughout the text. Concurrently, from a literary analysis standpoint, this pattern can be viewed as a deliberate stylistic choice to enhance textual cohesion. Repeating words in parallel structures is a well-documented feature of Aramaic and Syriac poetic traditions. These two interpretations are not mutually exclusive; rather, they converge on the understanding that these repetitions are intentional elements in the Syriac version rather than inadvertent translation errors. This dual perspective underscores the complex interplay between translation techniques and literary conventions in shaping the final form of the Syriac text.²¹¹

The frequency of word repetition in Hebrew and Syriac will be compared in the following table.

Hebrew text	Syriac text
יהוה (2a, 10a)	
אדנינו (2a, 10a)	ܐܕܝܢܐ (2x2a, 10)
מה (2b, 5a, 10b)	ܡܗ (2a, 10)
אדיר (2b, 10b)	ܥܒܕܐ (2a, 2b, 3b, 6b, 10)
שמך (2b, 10b)	ܥܒܕܐ (2a, 10)
כל (2b, 7b, 8a, 10b)	ܟܠ (2a, 7b, 8a, 10)
הארץ (2b, 10b)	ܐܪܥܐ (2a, 10)
שמים (2c, 4a, 9a)	ܫܡܝܐ (2b, 4a, 8b)
אשר (2c, 4b)	
	ܚܠܝܬܐ (3c, 3d)
	ܠܡܢܐ (3b, 4b)
כי (4a, 5a, 5b)	ܟܝܐ (3c, 4a)
מעשי (4a, 7a)	ܥܒܕܐ (4a, 7a)
ים (9a, 9b)	ܝܡܐ (2x9)
72 words and 29 repetitions of 12 words	69 words and 31 repetitions of 12 words

The overall number of words is slightly smaller in the case of Syriac, but the number of repeated words is still the same as in Hebrew (12 times) with a somewhat higher number of repetitions.

Word repetition is closely connected to and often underlines the sound figures. In the Syriac text, the opening and closing cola of Ps 8 are extraordinary in their density of sound repetition: ܐܕܝܢܐ ܡܗ ܥܒܕܐ ܥܒܕܐ ܥܒܕܐ ܥܒܕܐ repeats ܥ four times in a row and adds a metathesis of ܥ and ܥ in ܥܒܕܐ ܥܒܕܐ. The second colon in 2b

²¹¹ Van Peursen 2007, 63.

underlines both the alliteration and metathesis by using the word **עבד** and repeating the **ע**-sound in **עבד** (notice also **ע** and the same root in **עבד** in 3b). The **מ**-sound is echoed again at the beginning of 3a and then in the second strophe by the double **ממ** at the beginning of 3c and 4a. Also, the third strophe is initiated by the **מ**-consonant (v. 5a), and the sound is then repeated in 6a by **מח**.²¹² Since the first colon appears again at the end of the psalm (v. 10), it can be concluded that **מ** clearly dominates half of the psalm, frames the psalm, and is to a certain degree seconded by the **ע**-sound.

Additionally, the first two strophes are connected by consonants **מ**, **ע** and **ב** since they repeat in **במ** (2a), **ב** (2b), **מב** (3a), **מב** (3c) and **מב** (3d). It might be that **מב** (2a) and **מב** (4a) also want to participate in the same chain of alliteration. The repetition of **מב** at the end of the first two strophes in 3b and 4b was already mentioned above, but the sound will be repeated again by **מב** at the end of the third strophe in 7b. The second half of the psalm is coloured by the **ב**- and **ה**-sound: it occurs in 5b (**מב**), 6a (**מב**), 6b (**מב**), 7a (**מב**), 8a (**מב**), 8b (**מב**), 9 (**מב**) and 10 (**מב**). Lastly, the repetition of **מ** and **ע** in five words out of six in 6b and 7a attracts the eye, perhaps echoed also by **מב** and **מב** at the beginning of both cola in 8a and 8b.

In conclusion, we have listed 33 words out of 69 that participate in sound repetition, and thereby, we did not include all word repetitions that had already been counted earlier. The strophic structure of Ps 8 clearly benefits from the alliteration as strophic markers across the psalm.

The Hebrew counterpart also attests to the repetition of **מ**-sound at the beginning of cola (and close to the beginning or end of strophes) in 2b/10b (**מב**), 3a (**מב**) and 5a (**מב**), and underlines the repetition inside cola in 3b (**מב**), 3c (**מב**), 4a (**מב**), 6a (**מב**) and 7a (**מב**). Unlike the Syriac version, the repetition is distributed rather evenly throughout the psalm. The Hebrew psalm applies noticeably more repetition of **א** and **ע**: in 2a/10a (**אב**), in 2b/10a (**אב** and **אב**), in 2c (**אב** and **אב**), 3a (**אב**), 3b (**אב**), 3c (**אב**), 4a (**אב** and **אב**), 4b (**אב**), 5a (**אב**), 5b (**אב**), 6a (**אב**), 6b (**אב**), 7a (**אב**), 8a (**אב**) and 9b (**אב**). Thereby, the relative particle **אשר** seems to occur in the cola of both the second and third strophes (2c and 4b) and in general, the repetition of its equivalent is missing in the Syriac cola.

In the Hebrew text, there is no metathesis similar to the Syriac text, but a few other instances of alliteration are still represented. The **ש**-sound appears several

²¹² The **מ**-sound is the more striking if we consider that **מב** translates **אלהים** in Hebrew. The theological correction often belongs to the translation technique of P-Ps, trying to indicate more hierarchy between God and human beings and avoid polytheistic connotations. There is a debate about the meaning of the Hebrew word **אלהים** in the context. According to Crenshaw's (2001, 63) opinion, the audacious nature of this act constitutes an impudent expression, thereby bolstering the idea of God's significance, and Clifford (2002, 69) holds the word to be considered as "heavenly beings," and Craigie (2004, 108) is of the opinion that the word is an impression of God in humankind.

times but not necessarily in the initial position; hence, only the series of תמשילו (7a), שתה (7b), and שמים (9a) accumulating in the fourth and fifth strophes close to the end of the psalm can be mentioned. The repetition of שמך and השמים in 2b and 2c connecting מ and ש seems to round up the psalm. In the third strophe, the repetition of כו in כוננתה and וכוכבים (4b) is definitively remarkable.

Altogether, we counted 37 occasions of alliteration in 72 words, which is a slightly higher number of affected words than in the Syriac psalm. The distribution of alliteration in Hebrew is more even and has a slightly lower impact on the strophic structure. The figure of alliteration is taken over by the Syriac translator but used differently and more intensively in the first part of the psalm.

4. Parallelism and syntax in the Syriac psalm

The versification of this psalm exhibits several noteworthy characteristics, particularly in terms of parallelism and verb placement. While parallelism is not the dominant feature throughout the psalm, it is prominently displayed in specific sections.

The third strophe, encompassing vv. 5–7 stands out due to its three parallel bicola. This structure contrasts with the other strophes, highlighting its unique composition. Verses 8 and 9 present an intriguing structural element, featuring a list of living beings across three cola. This arrangement could be interpreted either as a tricolon or a bicolon followed by a monocolon. However, the concluding relative clause in v. 9, *ܕܝܚܝܝܐ ܦܥܠܐ ܕܝܚܝܝܐ*, disrupts the parallelistic balance, adding the form of closure to the structure.²¹³

It is important to note that the variations in versification between the Hebrew and Syriac versions do not significantly alter the occurrence of parallelism. The bicola in vv. 5–8 maintain synonymous parallelism in both versions, preserving this key poetic feature.

A striking aspect of the Syriac translation is its fidelity to the verb positioning of the Hebrew text. This precise mirroring is evident in several instances: in the beginning of the colon נתתה and ܕܡܫܚܐ in MT 2c and P-Ps 2b, יסדת and ܕܡܫܚܐ in 3b, אראה and ܕܡܫܚܐ in 4a, ותחסרהו and ܕܡܫܚܐ in 6a, תמשילו and ܕܡܫܚܐ in 7a, שתה and ܡܫܚܐ in 7b.

Verse 5 is distinguished by the placement of verbs at the end of both cola, a feature maintained in both MT and P-Ps. Perhaps the most notable structural element is the chiasmic arrangement of verbs in vv. 4 and 6. In both the Hebrew and Syriac versions, these verses exhibit verbs at the beginning of 4a/6a and at the end of 4b/6b, creating a symmetrical pattern that enhances the poetic structure.

²¹³ For more details on closure, see the classical work by Watson (2009, 62–65).

5. Quantitative poetic analysis

The following table will illustrate the metrics of the Syriac psalm according to the Leiden edition by counting words, syllables and consonants, both in separate cola and in larger units of bicola and monocola.

Strophes	Verses	Words	Words in verses	Syllables	Syllables in verses	Colometry	Transliteration	
I	2a	7	11	12	18	24	<i>Mār/yā/mā/ran/mā/mšab/baḥ/šmāk/</i> <i>bḵol/lāh/ 'ar/ 'ā</i>	ܡܪܝܢ ܡܫܒܒܐ ܠܗ ܫܡܐܟ ܒܚܐ ܠܗ ܐܪܥܐ
	b	4		6		16	<i>dyabṭ/šub/hāk/ 'al/ šmay/yā</i>	ܕܝܒܬܐ ܫܘܒ ܗܐܟܠ ܫܡܝܐ
	3a	4	6	9	14	18	<i>Men/pu/mā/ḏa 'lay/mē/ wḏaṭ/lā/yē</i>	ܡܢ ܦܘܡܐ ܕܐܠܝܡܐ ܘܕܬܠܐ ܝܐܠܝܡܐ
	b	2		5		11	<i>taq/qent/ teš/boḥ/tāk</i>	ܬܩܩܢܬܐ ܬܝܫܒܘܚܐ ܬܐܟܠܐ
II	3c	2	5	5	14	11	<i>Meṭ/tul / b 'eld/hā/bayk</i>	ܡܬܬܠܐ ܒܐܝܠܐ ܒܝܝܟܐ
	d	3		9		18	<i>dneṭ/baṭ/tal/</i> <i>b 'eld/hā/bā/dmeṭ/naq/qam</i>	ܕܢܬܐ ܒܬܠܐ ܒܐܝܠܐ ܕܡܬܬܠܐ ܢܩܩܡܐ
	4a	5	8	10	16	21	<i>Meṭ/tul/daḥ/zaw/šmayk/ 'hā/ḏā/ḏšeḇ/</i> <i>'ā/tāk</i>	ܡܬܬܠܐ ܕܐܠܝܡܐ ܫܡܝܐ ܗܐ ܕܐܝܠܐ ܕܫܝܒܐ ܐܠܝܡܐ
	b	3		6		14	<i>sah/rā/wḵawk/hē/taq/qent</i>	ܫܐܪܐ ܪܐܝܬܐ ܗܝܬܐ ܩܩܢܬܐ
III	5a	3	5	7	13	17	<i>Mā/nāw/gab/rā/ḏetd/ḵar/tāy</i>	ܡܐܢܐܝܬܐ ܕܝܬܐ ܕܝܠܐ ܕܝܠܐ
	b	2		6		14	<i>wḥar/nā/šā/ḏaḡ/qad/tāy</i>	ܘܗܪܐܢܐ ܫܐܝܬܐ ܕܝܠܐ ܕܝܠܐ
	6a	4	7	9	18	18	<i>Baš/šar/tāy/qal/lil/men/ma/la/kē</i>	ܒܫܐܪܐܝܬܐ ܕܝܠܐ ܕܝܠܐ ܕܝܠܐ
	b	3		9		21	<i>biq/qā/rā/wab/šub/hā/ 'a ' /tef/tāy</i>	ܒܝܩܩܐܪܐܝܬܐ ܕܝܠܐ ܕܝܠܐ ܕܝܠܐ
	7a	3	7	8	13	20	<i>Waš/leṭ/tāy/ba 'hā/ḏā/ ḏi/dayk</i>	ܘܫܠܬܐܝܬܐ ܕܝܠܐ ܕܝܠܐ ܕܝܠܐ
	b	4		5		16	<i>wḵol/sāmt/ṭhot/ reṯ/lāw</i>	ܘܚܠܐܝܬܐ ܕܝܠܐ ܕܝܠܐ
IV	8a	3	8	6	17	13	<i>'ā/nā/wḥaq/rē/ ḵol/hēn</i>	ܐܝܢܐܝܬܐ ܕܝܠܐ ܕܝܠܐ
	b	5		11		23	<i>'āḡ/hay/yu/tā/ḏḏab/rā/wṣef/rē/ḏbaš/</i> <i>may/yā</i>	ܐܝܬܐܝܬܐ ܕܝܠܐ ܕܝܠܐ ܕܝܠܐ
	9	5	5	11	11	26	<i>wnu/nē/ḏyam/mā/ḏ 'āḥ/rin/baš/bi/lē/</i> <i>ḏyam/mē</i>	ܘܢܘܢܐܝܬܐ ܕܝܠܐ ܕܝܠܐ ܕܝܠܐ
V	10	7	7	12	12	24	<i>Mār/yā/mā/ran/mā/mšab/baḥ/šmāk/</i> <i>bḵol/lāh / 'ar/ 'ā</i>	ܡܪܝܢ ܡܫܒܒܐ ܠܗ ܫܡܐܟ ܒܚܐ ܠܗ ܐܪܥܐ

The Syriac rendition of Ps 8, as presented in the Leiden edition, exhibits a distinctive structural composition. The text is primarily organised into six bicola, complemented by a tetracolon in v. 3 and two monocola in vv. 9 and 10. However, a closer

examination of parallelism reveals that the tetracolon effectively functions as two bicola, bringing the total count of functional bicola to nine.

The psalm's strophic arrangement demonstrates a nuanced approach to syllabic and lexical patterning. The initial strophe comprises two bicola, characterised by a syllabic distribution of 18:14 and a word count of 11:6. In the subsequent strophe, two bicola present a syllabic pattern of 14:16 and a word distribution of 5:8. Particularly noteworthy is the symmetrical structure evident in the syllabic arrangement of the third and fourth strophes.

The third strophe, consisting of three bicola, displays a syllabic pattern of 13:18:13 and a word count of 5:7:7. In contrast, the fourth strophe, composed of a bicolon and a monocolon, exhibits a syllabic arrangement of 17:11 and a word count of 8:5. This configuration results in a regular alternation of short and long syllabic cola 13:18:13 + 17:11, paired with the word structure of 5:7:7 + 8:5, where three longer cola are framed by two shorter cola. The concluding strophe, encompassing v. 10, consists of a single monocolon with 12 syllables and 7 words.

While the overall metrical structure is heterosyllabic, the observed symmetries suggest a translator's deliberate and sophisticated poetic approach to the word and syllable count. These structural intricacies and symmetrical patterns represent a distinctive feature of the Syriac version of Ps 8, reflecting a high level of poetic craftsmanship.

When we regard the number of syllables and words and consonants separately in every strophe, then the result in a table format is the following:

Strophes	Verses	Syllables	Words	Colometry
I	2–3b	32	17	69
II	3c–4	30	13	64
III	5–7	44	19	106
IV	8–9	28	13	62
V	10	12	7	24

On the level of syllable numbers, the first and the second strophe have roughly the same number of syllables (32 and 30), but on the level of word numbers, they are not balanced (17 and 13). It is worth mentioning that the second and fourth strophes are balanced regarding both syllable ratio (30 and 28) and word counting (13 and 13). The third and the fourth strophes are neither regarding the number of syllables (44 and 28) nor the number of words balanced (19 and 13). It is evident that the fifth strophe has no correlation with other strophes at all regarding counting both words and syllables.

The range of syllables per colon is between 5–12, and the range of words is between 2–7. Psalm 8 contains five strophes with a different number of cola, consisting of a total of 146 syllables and a structure of 18 cola. Thus, on average, each cola contains 8.11 syllables. The metrical pattern used in the psalm is heterosyllabic, and it differs from the isosyllabic metrical pattern used in the classical Syriac poetry of the 4th century onward.

Regarding the colometrical results, they are so variable that no regularity or symmetry can be supported except only in the first, second and third strophes (69, 64, 62), but the middle strophe is much longer. Two balanced bicola are visible in vv. 5 and 6 in the third strophe with 17:14 and 18:21 consonants, respectively. It is clear that Ps 8 is composed of strophes with different numbers of cola.

Now, let us turn to the Hebrew text of Ps 8. The following table will illustrate the respective numbers of syllables and words both in separate cola as well as in verses. Additionally, colometrical results are presented.

Strophes	Verses	Words	Words in verses	Syllables	Syllables in verses	Colometry		
I	2a	2	7	6	16	10	יהוה/א/ד/ני/נו	יהוה אדנינו
	b	5		10	16	מה/אדיר/שמך/ב/כל/ה/א/רץ	מה אדיר שמך בכל הארץ	
II	2c	5	5	12	12	18	אשר/נ/תת/תה/הוד/ד/על/הש/ש/מ/ים	אשר נתתה הודך על השמים
	3a	3	10	9	29	15	מפ/פי/עו/ל/לים/ו/י/נ/קים	מפי עוללים וינקים
	b	4		11	16		יס/סד/ת/עז/ל/מ/ען/צו/ר/יך	יסדת עז למען צורריך
	c	3		9	16		ל/הש/בית/או/יב/ו/מת/נק/קם	להשבית אויב ומתנקם
III	4a	5	9	14	26	21	כי/ארה/ש/מי/ד/מ/ע/שי/אצ/ב/ע/ת/יך	כי אראה שמיד מעשי אצבעתך
	b	4		12	19		י/רח/ו/כו/כ/בים/א/שר/כו/נ/ג/תה	ירח וכוכבים אשר כוננתה
	5a	4	8	8	17	14	מה/א/נוש/כי/תו/כ/ר/נו	מה אנוש כי תזכרנו
	b	4		9	14		ו/בן/א/דם/כי/תפ/ק/ד/נו	ובן אדם כי תפקדנו
IV	6a	3	6	12	23	16	ות/ת/חס/ס/ר/הו/מ/עט/מ/א/ל/הים	ותחסרהו מעט מאלהים
	b	3		11	15		ו/כ/בוד/ו/ה/דר/ת/עט/ט/ר/הו	וכבוד והדר תעטרהו
	7a	3	7	11	19	16	תמ/שי/ל/הו/ב/מ/ע/שי/י/דיך	תמשילהו במעשי ידך
	b	4		7	13		כל/שת/תה/ת/חת/רג/ליו	כל שתה תחת רגליו
V	8a	3	6	8	15	12	צנה/ו/א/ל/פ/ים/כל/לם	צנה ואלפים כלם
	b	3		7	11		ו/גם/ב/ה/מות/ש/די	וגם בהמות שדי
	9a	4	7	10	16	15	צפ/פור/ש/מ/ים/ו/ד/ג/י/הים	צפור שמים ודגי הים
	b	3		6	12		ע/בר/א/ר/חות/ימ/מים	עבר ארחות ימים
VI	10a	2	7	6	16	10	יהוה/א/ד/ני/נו	יהוה אדנינו
	b	5		10	16	מה/אדיר/שמך/ב/כל/ה/א/רץ	מה אדיר שמך בכל הארץ	

When we analyse the Hebrew text colometrically and additionally count the number of syllables and words both per colon and per verse, then it is remarkable that the

analysis results in somewhat unbalanced numbers. The exceptions are vv. 5–10, since vv. 5–9 have a notably balanced colometrical length of 12–16 (except 11 in v. 8a) and a particularly balanced number of words (3–4). In addition, vv. 6–10 have a remarkably balanced number of 6–7 words per verse. The number of syllables can be considered balanced in vv. 3, 4, 5, 6 and 8.

Comparing these results with the results of the analysis of the Syriac text, we have to conclude that the Syriac translator has noticed the tendency of balanced length in the second half of the Hebrew Ps 8 but turned the tendency into a consequent pattern regarding word numbers. The result is even stronger when comparing the syllabic structure, which indicates both the will of the translator and the character of the Syriac poetry to create syllabic balance or symmetry. The Hebrew authors obviously did not take advantage of similar or symmetric syllable numbers (in contrast to colometry).

Regarding Hebrew strophes quantitatively from the point of view of the number of words and syllables, the analysis indicates that the first strophe is composed of 16 syllables and 7 words, the second strophe is made up of 41 syllables and 15 words, the third strophe is composed of 43 syllables and 17 words, and the fourth strophe consists of 41 syllables and 13 words. The fifth strophe is composed of 31 syllables and 13 words. The sixth strophe contains 16 syllables and 7 words. All strophes are different.

Analysis of the psalm's structure reveals balanced proportions in both word and syllable counts across different strophes. The word count of the combined second and third strophes is proportional to that of the fourth and fifth strophes together. In terms of syllables, the second, third, and fourth strophes collectively demonstrate a balanced ratio. Additionally, the first and fifth strophes exhibit identical proportions in both word and syllable counts, reinforcing their role as framing elements in the psalm's composition.

Regarding the number of consonants and words, the analysis shows that the first strophe is composed of 26 consonants and 7 words, the second strophe consists of 65 consonants and 15 words, the third one is composed of 68 consonants and 17 words, the fourth strophe consists of 60 consonants and 13 words, the fifth strophe contains 50 consonants and 13 words, and the last one is composed of 26 consonants and 7 words. Consequently, no discernible association exists between strophes except in the second and third strophes. The range of syllables per colon is between 6–14, and the range of words is between 2–5. The psalm consists of a total of 192 syllables and is structured with 21 cola. Thus, on average, each colon contains 9.14 syllables.

6. Conclusion

In the absence of explicit strophic markers in the Syriac manuscripts of Ps 8, several implicit features serve to delineate its poetic structure. These include lexical repetition, which creates semantic unity within strophes; phonetic patterns that enhance cohesion through alliteration and consonantal repetition; and thematic unity, which

distinguishes each strophe's focus. Syntactic features and grammatical consistency further reinforce strophic boundaries, while rhetorical devices such as interrogatives signal transitions between sections to bold the shift in subject matter. Structural techniques, notably the use of cataloguing, help define individual strophes. The structural composition of the psalm is not significantly influenced by parallelism, which is generally regarded as a deficiency in poetic psalms.

Finally, the employment of inclusion frames the entire psalm, providing a clear demarcation of the final strophe and encapsulating the psalm's message. Collectively, these features offer a robust framework for identifying and analysing the strophic structure of Ps 8 in its Syriac version.

We have seen that Ps 8 in Syriac is in many ways similar to the Hebrew text in MT. The translator has exactly followed the parallelism, the position of verbs in verses and their chiasmic use. Furthermore, the translator was aware of almost all poetic figures used by the Hebrew scribes: metre, word repetition, symmetry, alliteration, marking of strophes with certain poetic features, etc. However, it is remarkable that the Syriac translator used the features slightly differently in some places and particularly emphasised the symmetry in the psalm. Such is the case with the framing vv. 2a and 10, characterised by its inclusion form, and the inner frame of ܠܚܢܐ in vv. 4a and 7a.

Since the Syriac translator tended to render several Hebrew words with one and the same Syriac lexeme, word repetition underlines a slightly different focus of the psalm (particularly the fivefold repetition of the verbal root ܥܒܕ and slightly different strophic structure. Moreover, the versification in Syriac exhibits slight variations compared to the Hebrew text.

Furthermore, we have noticed that the Hebrew authors of Ps 8 considered balanced colometry an ideal. At the same time, the Syriac translator was aware of the meaning of syllable and word count, thus creating a clearly different rhythm and symmetries in the text. A particular feature of the Syriac Ps 8 is the heterosyllabic metre, which tends to build a regular pattern, such as 13:18:13 in vv. 5–7, followed by 17:11 syllables in vv. 8–9, thus altering short and long verses rhythmically.

In the Syriac text, each colon has an average of 8.11 syllables, whereas in the Hebrew text, the average is 9.14 syllables per cola.²¹⁴ Although the discovery indicates that the metrical patterns and strophic structures are not entirely compatible with those found in classical Syriac poetry starting from the 4th century onwards, they share features such as word repetition, thematic coherence, parallelism, and occasional rhythmic and isosyllabic patterns. These similarities suggest a likely connection between the structure of P-Ps and characteristics found in classical Syriac poetry.

²¹⁴ Freedman's hypothesis (1973, 237–256) regarding ancient poems suggests a consistent preference for dividing each colon into 8 syllables. Fokkelman (2000, 383) also notes that the typical number of syllables per colon is between 7 and 9, while usually the main standard number is 8.

CHAPTER THREE: PSALM 19

1. General information

The combination of the words of God and the life of the one praying, along with the delivery of God's message to those who can hear it, contribute to the beauty of the psalm. What Ps 19 aims to emphasise is expressed through parallel phrases. Many of them are repeated with different words to convey similar concepts and information from previous sentences.²¹⁵ Likewise, similarities in the language structure and the theme on the one hand and a great harmonic structure in strophes on the other show that Ps 19 is a beautiful example of poetry.²¹⁶

Two separate sections make up Ps 19: the first in vv. 2–5b showing praise to the greatness of El in heaven and being considered a morning hymn, together with the greatness of the sun in vv. 5c–7, and the second section indicating the fulfilment of the law, vv. 8–11, along with a petition, self-control from sin and allowance of prayers, vv. 12–15 with a request for absolution, restraint from sin, and acceptance in worship.²¹⁷

On the one hand, Ps 19 fits very well with Ps 18, where the impeccability of God's way with man is outlined; on the other hand, the psalm has been compared with Ps 8, where the name of God and the creation of man is celebrated.²¹⁸ Since the psalm consists of two parts, some scholars like Fohrer think that Ps 19 is a hymn and wisdom poetry.²¹⁹ Although some scholars, in view of the wisdom character of the psalm, ascribe it to an exilic or post-exilic date, there is no sure clue by which the date or author can be accurately determined.²²⁰

2. The text and strophic structure

2.1. The Syriac text

The text of Ps 19, according to the Leiden edition (1980), and its translation into English is the following.²²¹ The Roman numbers refer to the strophes, which are explained below.

²¹⁵ Keating 2001, 4–5.

²¹⁶ Terrien 2003, 214.

²¹⁷ Briggs and Briggs 1906–1907, 162.

²¹⁸ Murphy 1875, 154.

²¹⁹ Craigie 2004, 179; Fohrer 1976, 286. Kraus (1993, 299) believes that Ps 19A can be categorised as praise, while for Ps 19B, there is no decisive category.

²²⁰ Craigie 2004, 180.

²²¹ The English translation is according to Taylor et al. (2020) but has been modified occasionally.

I	2a	The heavens narrate the glory of God,	שָׁמַיָּהּ מְדַבֵּר כְּבוֹד אֱלֹהֵינוּ.
	b	and the expanse of the firmament declares the work of his hands.	וְהַשָּׁמַיִם מְדַבֵּר מַעֲשֵׂה יָדָיו.
	3a	Day after day it pours forth speech,	וְהַשָּׁמַיִם לֵבָד לֵבָד מְדַבֵּר.
	b	night after night it declares knowledge.	וְלַיְלָה לַיְלָה מְדַבֵּר דָּעָה.
	4a	There is no speech or words,	אֵין דְּבָר וְאֵין מִלָּה.
	b	for their voice is not heard.	וְלִישָׁנָם אֵין שְׁמִיעָה.
	5a	Their tidings have gone forth in all the earth,	וְהַשְׁמוּעָה יָצְתָה בְּכָל הָאָרֶץ.
	b	and their words to the ends of the world.	וְדִבְרֵיהֶם אֶל־כְּפֹת הָעוֹלָם.
II	5c	And he has pitched his canopy among them above the sun. ²²²	וְהוּא מִצֵּב אֹהֶל בְּתוֹכָם מֵעַל הַשֶּׁמֶשׁ.
	6a	And he is like a bridegroom who comes forth from the bridal chamber,	וְהוּא כְּחָתָן מֵצֵאת הַחֲדָר הַקִּדְוִי.
	b	he leaps for joy like a champion ready to run his course.	וְהוּא קָפוֹץ לְשִׂמְחָה כְּחֹמֶץ מְרֵץ לְרֹדְתוֹ.
	7a	And his coming forth is from the ends of the heavens,	וְהוּא מֵצֵאת הַשָּׁמַיִם הַרְחֵק.
	b	and his turning point is to the ends of the heavens,	וְהוּא מֵצֵאת הַשָּׁמַיִם הַרְחֵק.
	c	and there is nothing that escapes his heat.	וְאֵין מִשְׁכַּח חֹמֶתוֹ.
III	8a	The law of the Lord is without blemish, and it restores the soul;	וְהַחֹק הַלֵּוֹי לֹא־יִבְלֶה וְהוּא מְשַׁלֵּם נֶפֶשׁ.
	b	the testimony of the Lord is trustworthy, and it imparts wisdom to babes.	וְהָעֵדוּת הַלֵּוֹי מִשְׁתַּכְּחִת וְהוּא מְעַלְמֵת לְבָנִים.
	9a	The commandments of the Lord are upright, and they make the heart glad;	וְהַצִּוְוֹת הַלֵּוֹי יֵשֶׁרִים וְהֵן מְשִׂיחִים לֵב.
	b	the commandment of the Lord is proven, and it illumines the eyes.	וְהַצִּוְוָה הַלֵּוִי מִשְׁתַּכְּחִת וְהוּא מְאִיר עֵינַיִם.
	10a	The fear of the Lord is pure, and it endures forever;	וְהַיִּירָא הַלֵּוִי טָהוֹר וְהוּא לְעוֹלָם וָעֶד.
	b	the judgments of the Lord are true, and they are just in every way.	וְהַדִּינִים הַלֵּוִי אֱמֻנָה וְהֵם צְדִיקִים בְּכָל דְּבָר.
	11a	And they are more to be desired than gold and than precious stones,	וְהֵם מְרֻצִּים מִזָּהָב וּמִבְּרִיטִים.
	b	and they are sweeter than honey and the honeycomb.	וְהֵם מְשַׁדִּים מִדְּבַר וּמִחֶמֶת.
IV	12a	And your servant will take heed to them,	וְאֶת־עַבְדְּךָ יִשְׁמָעוּ לָהֶם.
	b	if he keeps them, he will be greatly rewarded.	וְאִם־יִשְׁמָעוּ אֵת־הַצִּוְוֹת יִשְׁלַח־לְךָ.
	13a	Who perceives his own faults	מִי־יִשְׁמָעוּ אֶת־עֲוֹנוֹתָיו.
	b	and clean me from hidden faults?	וְיִשְׁמָעוּ אֶת־עֲוֹנוֹתָיו.
	14a	Also keep back your servant from iniquity,	וְאַתָּה מְשַׁלֵּם אֶת־עַבְדְּךָ מִכָּל־עֲוֹנוֹתָיו.
	b	that the wicked may not exercise dominion over me,	וְאֵין־יִשְׁמָעוּ אֶת־עֲוֹנוֹתָיו.
	c	and I may be cleansed from my sins.	וְאֵין־יִשְׁמָעוּ אֶת־עֲוֹנוֹתָיו.

²²² Taylor et al. (2020, 63) report that the Hebrew text is לְשֶׁמֶשׁ ‘for the sun’, while P-Ps renders מֵעַל הַשֶּׁמֶשׁ ‘above the sun’.

- V 15a May the words of my mouth be acceptable to you, שִׁמְךָ לִי כְּחֵן מִלִּפְנֵי מֶלֶךְ.
 b and may the thought of my heart be before you, וְחִשְׁבֹתֵי לִבִּי מִלִּפְנֵי מֶלֶךְ חַיִּים וְחַיִּים.
 O Lord, my helper, and my saviour.

This analysis proposes a framework for identifying strophic divisions within Ps 19, suggesting a structure comprising five distinct strophes in vv. 2–5b, 5c–7, 8–11, 12–14 and 15. The demarcation of the strophes is based on several poetic and thematic criteria.

The initial strophe (vv. 2–5b) is characterised by a notable מ-alliteration, occurring nine times, and a series of semantically paired terms: שָׁמַיִם ‘heaven’ in v. 2a / רָקִיעַ ‘firmament’ in v. 2b, אֶרֶץ ‘earth’ in v. 5a / עֲוֹלָם ‘world’ in v. 5b, יוֹם ‘day’ in v. 3a / לַיְלָה ‘night’ in v. 3b. Additionally, the repetition of אֶרֶץ in vv. 3, 4a and חַיִּים in vv. 4a, 5b reinforces the cohesion of this unit. The thematic focus on אֶרֶץ, introduced at the outset, further delineates the strophe.

The second strophe (vv. 5c–7) is distinguished by a thematic transition, centring on the sun. The term שֶׁשׁ ‘sun’ serves as a pivotal opening, analogous to the function of שָׁמַיִם in the preceding strophe. A semantic cluster formed by שֶׁשׁ, שֶׁשׁ and חֶם ‘his heat’ in cola 5c, 7a, 7b and 7c preserves the internal cohesion. The strophe demonstrates a seven-fold alliteration with the consonant ש, along with the structural repetition of the waw copula in vv. 5c, 6a, 7a, 7b and 7c, creating an inclusion between vv. 5c and 7c.

Verses 8–11 constitute the third strophe, marked by a thematic shift comparable to that observed between the first and second strophes. This section explores the fulfilment of the law. Syntactical parallelism is evident throughout, except in the final verse, suggesting a structural closure. The strophe is further unified by synonymous parallelism and an intensified מ-alliteration, occurring seventeen times. The divine name’s repetition in vv. 8–10 (six times) provides additional cohesion. As discussed in the introductory chapter, this strophe exemplifies the poem’s sophisticated structural techniques.

The fourth strophe (vv. 12–14) is characterised by a semantic correlation centred on the themes of seeking absolution and avoiding sin. A series of synonymous terms in vv. 12a and 14a אֲנִי ‘your servant’, עֲוֹנוֹת ‘faults’ in v. 13a, סְתוּרִים ‘hidden (faults)’ in v. 13b, חַסֵּד ‘iniquity’ in v. 14a, and חַטֹּאת ‘my sins’ in v. 14c reinforces this thematic unity. An inclusion formed by the waw copula and the consonant א in אֲנִי and אֲנִי frames this strophic unit.

The final strophe, comprising v. 15, serves as a conclusion to the psalm. It is distinguished by its vocative structure and a shift in subject matter. The cola within this verse exhibit complementary elements of communication or self-expression, juxtaposing external “words” with internal “thought”, forming a synonymous parallelism.

In terms of strophic form, Ps 19 presents a varied structure: eight cola in the first and third strophes, six in the second, seven in the fourth, and two in the fifth.

2.2. The Hebrew text

The Hebrew MT text of Ps 19 and its English translation are following:²²³

I	2a	The heavens are telling of the glory of God,	השמים מספרים כבוד אל
	b	and the firmament is declaring the work of his hands.	ומעשה ידיו מגיד הרקיע
	3a	Day to day pours forth speech,	יום ליום יביע אמר
	b	and night to night reveals knowledge.	ולילה ללילה יחזה דעת
	4a	There is no speech, nor are there words,	אין אמר ואין דברים
	b	their voice is not heard.	בלי נשמע קולם
	5a	<u>Their voice</u> has gone out through all the earth,	בכל הארץ יצא קולם
	b	and their utterances to the end of the world.	ובקצה תבל מליהם
II	5c	In them he has placed a tent for the sun.	לשמש שם אהל בהם ²²⁴
	6a	That is as a bridegroom coming out of his chamber,	והוא כחתן יצא מחפתו
	b	it rejoices as a strong man to run the course.	ישיש כגבור לרוץ ארח
	7a	Its rising is from one end of the heavens,	מקצה השמים מוצאו
	b	and its circuit to the other end of them,	ותקופתו על קצותם
	c	and there is nothing hidden from its heat.	ואין נסתר מחמתו
III	8a	The law of Yhwh is perfect,	תורת יהוה תמימה
	b	restoring the soul;	משיבת נפש
	c	the testimony of Yhwh is sure,	עדות יהוה נאמנה
	d	making wise the simple.	מחכימת פתי
	9a	The precepts of Yhwh are right,	פקודי יהוה ישרים
	b	rejoicing the heart;	משמחי לב
	c	the commandment of Yhwh is pure,	מצות יהוה ברה
	d	enlightening the eyes.	מאירת עינים
	10a	The fear of Yhwh is clean,	יראת יהוה טהורה
	b	enduring forever;	עומדת לעד
	c	the judgments of Yhwh are true,	משפטי יהוה אמת
	d	they are righteous altogether.	צדקו יחדו
	11a	They are more desirable than gold,	הנחמדים מזהב
	b	yes, than much fine gold;	ומפז רב
	c	sweeter also than honey,	ומתוקים מדבש
	d	and the drippings of the honeycomb.	ונפת צופים

²²³ Regarding the English translation of the Hebrew text, I acknowledge the assistance of Bible.org, with the ESV, LSB, and NABRE being particularly helpful for my work.

²²⁴ Many consider the colon 5c to be an integral part of v. 6, see Van der Lugt 2006, 219.

IV	12a	Moreover, by them your servant is warned,	גם עבדך נזהר בהם
	b	in keeping them there is great reward.	בשמרם עקב רב
	13a	Who can discern his errors,	שגיאות מי יבין
	b	acquit me of hidden faults?	מנסתרות נקני
	14a	Also keep back your servant from presumptuous sins,	גם מזדים חשך עבדך ²²⁵
	b	let them not rule over me;	אל ימשלו בי
	c	then I will be blameless, and I shall be innocent	אז איתם ונקיתי
	d	of great transgression.	מפשע רב
V	15a	Let the words of my mouth be your desire,	יהיו לרצון אמרי פי
	b	and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in your sight,	והגיון לבי לפניך
	c	Yhwh, my rock and my Redeemer.	יהוה צורי וגאלי

There is a problem in colon 5a related to the word קום. Some scholars are of the opinion that the word קָנָם ‘their measure’ should be changed and transformed into קוֹלָם ‘their voice’ to preserve the parallelism better.²²⁶ However, some scholars believe that the word קום should be preserved.²²⁷ This study will prefer to change the word to קוֹלָם, as BHS has suggested, and as LXX, Vg. and, above all, P-Ps suggest.

In analysing the strophic structure of Ps 19, while definitive markers delineating strophes are not explicitly present, several linguistic and thematic elements suggest a division into five distinct strophes: vv. 2–5b, 5c–7, 8–11, 12–14, and 15.²²⁸ This analysis examines the structural, semantic, and phonological features that support this strophic arrangement.

The initial strophe is characterised by its focus on cosmological elements, employing word pairs that represent various aspects of the universe and natural phenomena. These include the word pairs השמים ‘the heavens’ in v. 2a / הרקיע ‘the firmament’ in v. 2b, יום ‘day’ in v. 3a / לילה ‘night’ in v. 3b, הארץ ‘the earth’ in v. 5a / תבל ‘world’ in v. 5b.

Besides, lexical repetitions reinforce the cohesion of this strophe: words אין ‘no, nor’ in vv. 4a (2x), אִמֵּר ‘speech’ in vv. 3a and 4a, קוֹלָם ‘voice’ in vv. 4b and 5a.

²²⁵ Fokkelman (2000, 99–100) holds the view that v. 14 should be read as a tricolon.

²²⁶ BHS, Cheyne (1904, 76); Bratcher and Reyburn (1991, 188); Seybold (1996, 85); Dimock (1791, 21); Murphy (1875, 161); Oesterley (1962, 169).

²²⁷ Alexander (1864, 87); Kraus (1978, 298).

²²⁸ Van der Lugt (2006, 220) divides the psalm into two halves and several subunits: vv. 2–4, 5–7 || 8, 9 | 10, 11 | 12–13, 14–15; Fokkelman (2000, 96–99) into nine units: vv. 2–3, 4–5b, 5c–7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12–13, 14–15; Terrien (2003, 209–212) into seven units: vv. 2–4, 5–7, 8–9b, 9c–10, 11–12, 13–14, 15; Seybold (1996) into vv. 2–7, 8–11, 12–15.

For further divisions, see Van der Lugt (2006, 223): Köster (1837) vv. 2–4, 5–7, 8–11, 12–15; Sommer (1846) vv. 2–3, 4–5, 6–7, 8–9, 10–11, 12–14, 15; De Wette (1856) vv. 2–4, 6–7, 8–11, 12–15; Ewald (1866) vv. 2–5, 6–7, 8–11, 12–15; Gunkel (1926) vv. 2–3, 4–5b, 5c–6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12–13, 14, 15; Kissane (1953) vv. 2–7, 8–10, 11–14, 15; Kraus (1978) vv. 2–7, 8–15; Craigie (1983) vv. 2–3, 4–5b, 5c–7, 8–15.

Phonologically, a quadruple alliteration of the letter מ, combined with twelve additional occurrences of the מ-consonant throughout the verses, emphasises the strophic cohesion.

The structural composition of the second strophe, encompassing verses 5c–7, is predicated on two primary factors. Firstly, a significant thematic transition is observed with the introduction of the lexeme לשמש ‘on the sun’, which redirects the focus towards the sun’s celestial journey. This shift in subject matter establishes a cohesive thematic unit within these verses. Secondly, the strophe’s cohesion is further reinforced through phonological devices. Notably, a triple מ-alliteration, coupled with the recurrent use of the מ-consonant, serves to demarcate and emphasise the strophic boundaries.

The third strophe (vv. 8–11) is demarcated by a thematic shift, focusing on the fulfilment of the law. This strophe is marked by several distinct features, including the sixfold repetition of the divine name, which appears once in each line of vv. 8–10. The lines exhibit a uniform syntactic pattern consisting of a construct phrase, an adjective, and a participle. Additionally, the lines are of comparable length, reinforcing the structural coherence. The presence of the Qinah metre is notable in eight structurally and syntactically similar bicola, apart from the final verse. As previously discussed in the introductory chapter, this metrical pattern plays a significant role in the poem’s structure. As such, this type of syntactical structure indicates that closure has been formed in this strophe. Another prominent feature of this passage is the frequent use of synonymous parallelism throughout.

The fourth strophe (vv. 12–14) is unified by its thematic focus on seeking absolution and restraint from sins. Key structural elements, including adverbs גם ‘moreover’ at the beginning of vv. 12a and 14a, and אז ‘then’ in v. 14c not only highlight the strophe but also form an adverbial inclusion. Furthermore, a collection of synonymous words, including שגיאות ‘errors’ in v. 13a, מנסתרות ‘hidden faults’ in v. 13b, זדים ‘presumptuous sins’ in v. 14a and פשע ‘transgression’ in v. 14d underscore the strophe. Besides, the repetition of the words עבדך ‘your servant’ in vv. 12a and 14a and רב ‘great’ in vv. 12b and 14d emphasises the strophe.

The final strophe, consisting solely of v. 15, serves as a conclusion focused on admission to worship. It is distinguished by a shift to the vocative structure. Moreover, it is remarkable that the consonant י, repeated in cola 15a (יהי) and 15c (יהוה) forms a highlighting inclusion.²²⁹ Furthermore, the repetition of the consonant ה consecutively in each colon of v. 15 intertwines the cola with each other.²³⁰

This detailed structural analysis reveals the sophisticated composition of Ps 19, demonstrating how lexical choices, syntactic patterns, and phonological features work in concert to create a cohesive yet dynamically structured poetic text.

²²⁹ Given, Yhwh is not pronounced as ‘*adonay*’ like in the late second temple period.

²³⁰ Fokkelman’s strophic analysis of Ps 19 (2000, 96–99) combines linguistic, structural, and quantitative approaches. He examines phonological features, semantic patterns, literary devices (such as inclusion and merisms), syntactic structures, and word/syllable counts. Terrien (2003, 208–213) divides the psalm into strophes according to its themes and thematic transitions.

3. Word repetition and sound figures

The survey of word repetition shows that the Syriac text replaces different Hebrew words with Syriac equivalents that are more appropriate in the given context. Thus, שָׁמַיִם ‘heavens’ in vv. 2a and 7a are translated הַשְּׁמַיִם; דִּבַּר ‘declare’ in vv. 2b and 3b translates מַגִּיד and יְחִוּה. The Syriac translator may prefer to use the same word for several Hebrew words to achieve a more consistent pattern of repetition. הַיּוֹם and לַיְלָה ‘day to day’ and ‘night to night’ in v. 3 for יוֹם לַיּוֹם and לַיְלָה לַלַּיְלָה; מִלָּה ‘word’ in vv. 3a and 4a translates אִמַּר. Furthermore, מִלִּים ‘words’ in vv. 4a, 5b, 15a translates דְּבָרִים, מִלִּי and אִמַּרִּי; לֹא ‘not’ in vv. 4a and 7c translates אֵין and forms inevitably an inclusion; הֵצֵא ‘go forth’ in vv. 5a, 6a, 7a is applied for יֵצֵא; סוּפֵר ‘ends’ in vv. 5b and 7a, b translates קִצָּה; הַצִּוְוָה ‘the commandment(s) of the Lord’ in vv. 9a and 9b translates מִצְוַת יְהוָה and פְּקוּדֵי יְהוָה; לֵב ‘heart’ in vv. 9a and 15b stands for לֵב; חֶבְדְּךָ ‘your servant’ and אֲפֹכֶיךָ ‘also’ in vv. 12a and 14a translate עֲבָדְךָ and גַּם, which build up an inclusion. It is worth noting that רַב in vv. 12 and 14 is repeated to better relate the two verses in the Hebrew text, while the Syriac text overlooks this connection.

The following table illustrates the frequency of word repetition in both Hebrew and Syriac.

Hebrew text	Syriac text
הַשְּׁמַיִם (2a, 7a)	הַשְּׁמַיִם (2a, 7a, 7b)
יוֹם (3a 2x)	הַיּוֹם (3a 2x)
לַיְלָה (3b 2x)	לַיְלָה (3b 2x)
אִמַּר (3a, 4a, 15a)	אִמַּר (3a, 4a)
	מִלִּים (4a, 5b, 15a)
אֵין (4a, 7c)	אֵין (4a, 7c)
קוֹלִם (4b, 5a)	
יֵצֵא (5a, 6a, 7a)	הֵצֵא (5a, 6a, 7a)
קִצָּה (5b, 7a, 7b)	סוּפֵר (5b, 7a, 7b)
	חֶבְדְּךָ (6a, 7a, 7c, 11a2x, 11b2x, 13b, 14a, 14c)
	אֲפֹכֶיךָ (6a, 6b)
מִצְוַת יְהוָה (8a, c, 9a, c, 10a, c, 15c)	מִצְוַת יְהוָה (8a, b, 9a, b, 10a, b, 15b)
לֵב (9b, 15b)	לֵב (9a, 15b)
	הַצִּוְוָה (9a, 9b)
רַב (11b, 12b, 14d)	
עֲבָדְךָ (12a, 14a)	חֶבְדְּךָ (12a, 14a)
גַּם (12, 14)	אֲפֹכֶיךָ (4a, 12a, 14a)
123 words and 35 repetitions of 13 words	140 words and 48 repetitions of 15 words

A comparative analysis of word counts reveals that the Hebrew text exhibits fewer strong word repetitions compared to its Syriac counterpart. This observation indicates that repetition is a more prominent stylistic feature in the Syriac version.²³¹

The Syriac translation demonstrates a sophisticated approach to rendering the Hebrew text, balancing fidelity to the source with target language stylistic considerations. Notably, instances occur where multiple Hebrew words are consolidated into a single Syriac term, facilitating more strategic word repetition in the target text. This translational strategy suggests a deliberate effort to maintain or enhance the emphatic function of repetition while adapting to the linguistic constraints and stylistic preferences of the Syriac language.

Particular attention is drawn to vv. 4, 7, 12, and 14, where repetitions in the Hebrew text necessitated corresponding inclusions in the Syriac version. This adherence to the source text's repetitive patterns underscores the Syriac translator's commitment to preserving the structural and rhetorical features of the Hebrew original. The translator's fidelity to the Hebrew word order further exemplifies their dedication to maintaining textual accuracy while navigating the complexities of cross-linguistic transfer.

The consistent replication of word repetitions across both versions serves to delineate and emphasise strophic boundaries within the psalm. This structural function of repetition transcends linguistic boundaries, suggesting that the strophic markers play a crucial role in the overall composition and interpretation of the psalm in both traditions.

The Syriac rendering of vv. 4b and 5a of the Hebrew text presents an intriguing case of lexical divergence in translation. The Hebrew text employs a single term, קולם, in both instances. However, the Syriac translator opted for two distinct lexemes: ܟܠܡܐ and ܟܠܡܐ. This differentiation in the target language, where the source text maintains lexical consistency, is noteworthy. It is important to note that this type of translational diversity—introducing variation where the source text shows repetition—is relatively uncommon in Syriac translations of Hebrew texts.²³² More frequently, the translator tends towards maintaining lexical consistency when encountering repeated terms in the source language. The deviation from this norm in

²³¹ The morphosyntactic structure of Syriac psalms exhibits a notable divergence from their Hebrew counterparts, particularly in the realm of prepositional usage. In Syriac, prepositions predominantly manifest as independent lexical units, standing discretely from their associated words. This contrasts sharply with the Hebrew convention, where prepositions such as -ב and -ל are typically affixed to the subsequent word as bound morphemes.

This distinctive feature of Syriac syntax engenders significant implications for the textual composition. Primarily, it results in a substantial augmentation of the overall word count within the psalm. Moreover, this syntactic peculiarity precipitates a marked increase in lexical repetitions. A salient illustration of this phenomenon is observed in the frequent recurrence of certain prepositions, notably ܐܢܝܢ (occurring ten times) and ܐܢܝܢ (appearing twice).

²³² Van Peursen 2007, 63. Weitzman (1999, 93) suggests that the Syriac translators aimed to reduce monotony by incorporating variation into the text.

prevalent in the Hebrew text but not as much as in the Syriac text; it is remarkable that the consonant *ʾ* with its repetition in cola 15a (יהי) and 15c (יהוה) forms an inclusion in this tricolon. The distribution of alliteration is less significant than in Syriac and this lesser repetition has less effect on the strophic structure in the Hebrew text. It is clear that in a few verses, including 5, 6, 8, 12 and 13, there is no trace of alliteration.

4. Parallelism and syntax in the Syriac psalm

An analysis of the structural composition of Ps 19 reveals significant patterns in both the Hebrew original and its Syriac translation, particularly in terms of parallelism and verse types. The Hebrew text predominantly employs synonymous parallelism, a feature that is especially pronounced in the second strophe (vv. 8–11). This section comprises eight bicola, or four tetracola, exhibiting not only semantic similarity but also syntactic parallelism. This structural consistency extends to vv. 13 and 14, where synonymous parallelism is also evident.

The Syriac translation demonstrates a nuanced approach to rendering these parallelisms, often employing word repetition or strategic additions and omissions to enhance the clarity of parallel structures. A notable example occurs in v. 7, where the Syriac translator repeats the term ܫܡܝܐ ‘heavens’ in two cola, diverging from the Hebrew text’s use of a possessive pronoun קצותם ‘their ends’ in the second colon. This adaptation creates a more explicit synonymous parallelism in the Syriac version. Similarly, in v. 14, the Syriac text introduces the term ܥܠܝܐ ‘evil ones’ in the second colon, clarifying potential ambiguities in the Hebrew original and reinforcing the synonymous parallel structure.

While the Syriac translation generally adheres to the Hebrew word order, it occasionally deviates through omissions or additions, seemingly to elucidate the structural elements or to refine the translation. This approach reflects a balance between fidelity to the source text and adaptations for clarity in the target language.

An intriguing feature emerges in the Syriac rendering of vv. 2, where the chiasmic structure of the Hebrew is preserved, either intentionally or as a byproduct of strict adherence to the original word order. This chiasmus effectively creates a cohesive unit, emphasising the celestial imagery as perceived during day and night. Furthermore, the Syriac translation more frequently employs the waw copula as a connective device between cola, potentially serving to enhance the text’s rhythmic flow or to delineate structural units more clearly.

5. Quantitative poetic analysis

The following table shows the metrics of the Syriac psalm according to the Leiden edition by counting syllables and words both in verses and separate cola.

Strophes	Verses	Words	Words in verses	Syllables	Syllables in verses	Colometry	Transliteration	
I	2a	4	8	10	19	20	<i>Šmay/yā/meš/ta/’ēn/šub/hēh/da/ lā/hā</i>	שִׁמַּי יָא מֵשׁ תַּא עֵן שׁוּב הֵה דַּא לָא הָא
	b	4		9		20	<i>wa/’bāq/’i/ḏāw/mḥaw/wē/ar/qi/’ā</i>	וַא בָּא קִי דָּא וּמְחַא וְעֵא רִי אֵא
	3a	4	8	8	16	17	<i>Yaw/mā/lyaw/mā/mab/ba/’mēm/rā</i>	יַא מָא לַיַּא מָא מַב בַּא מֵמ רָא
	b	4		8		18	<i>Lel/yā/llel/yā/mḥaw/wē/mad/’ā</i>	לֵל יָא לֵל יָא מְחַא וְעֵא מַד אֵא
	4a	5	8	7	12	15	<i>Layt/ mēm/rā/’āf/ lā/mel/lē</i>	לַיַּת מֵמ רָא אַף לָא מֵל לֵע
	b	3		5		14	<i>dlā/ nešt/ma/’ bqāl/hon</i>	דִּלָּא נֵשֵׁת מַא בְּקָאֵל הֹן
	5a	4	7	8	16	19	<i>Bkol/lāh/’ar/’ā/nef/qat/šbart/hon</i>	בְּקוֹל לָאָה אַר אֵא נֵף קַת שְׁבַרַת הֹן
	b	3		8		18	<i>wab/saw/pēh/dīē/hēl/mel/lay/hon</i>	וַב סַא וּפֵה דִּי עֵה מֵל לַיַּי הֹן
II	5c	5	5	7	7	19	<i>W’al/šem/šā/nqaš/mašk/nēh/bhon</i>	וַאֵל שֵׁם שָׂא נְקַשׁ מַשְׁכְּ נֵה בְּחוֹן
	6a	7	12	10	19	24	<i>Whu/’ak/ḥat/nā/ḏnā/fēq/men/bēl/ gno/nā</i>	וְחַא אַק חַאטְ נָא דְּנָא פִּיעַק מֵן בֵּעַל גְּנוֹ נָא
	b	5		9		22	<i>nḏuṣ/’ak/gab/bā/rā/lmer/ḥat/’ur/hēh</i>	נְדוּס אַק גַּב בָּא רָא לְמֵר חַאט אִיר הֵה
	7a	4	12	7	20	14	<i>Wmen/saw/pay/šmay/yā/map/qēh</i>	וּמֵן סַא וּפַי שִׁמַּי יָא מַפ קֵה
	b	4		7		16	<i>wmasm/keh/’al/saw/pay/šmay/yā</i>	וּמַסְמ כֵּה אֵל סַא וּפַי שִׁמַּי יָא
	c	4		6		14	<i>wlayt/ dīā/šē/ men/ lah/gēh</i>	וּלַיַּת דִּי אֵא שֵׁ מֵן לַה גֵּה
III	8a	6	11	11	24	25	<i>Nā/mo/sēh/dmār/yā/dlā/mum/ wmaf/nē/na/šā</i>	נָא מוֹ שֵׁה דְּמָאֵר יָא דִּלָּא מוּם וּמַפְּ נֵה נַא שָׂא
	b	5		13		29	<i>sāh/du/ṭēh/ḏmār/yā/mhaym/nā/ wam/ḥak/mā/ yā/lu/ḏē</i>	סָאָה דוּ טֵה דְּמָאֵר יָא מְחַיִּם נָא וַאֵם חַאק מָא יָא לוּ דֵּע
	9a	5	10	12	22	28	<i>Puq/dā/nāw/dmār/yā/ṭri/šin/ wam/ḥad/dēn/ leb/bā</i>	פּוּק דָּא נָאָו דְּמָאֵר יָא טְרִי שִׁין וַאֵם חַאד דֵּעַן לֵב בָּא
	b	5		10		23	<i>puq/dā/nēh/ dmār/yā/ yḥē/ wman/har/’ay/nē</i>	פּוּק דָּא נֵה דְּמָאֵר יָא יַחֵעַ וּמַאֵן חַאֵר אַי נֵע
	10a	5	11	11	22	23	<i>Dehl/ṭēh/dmār/yā/ḏak/yā/ wqay/yā/mā/ l’ā/lam</i>	דֵּהֵל טֵה דְּמָאֵר יָא דַּאק יָא וּקַיַּי יָא מָא לֵא לַאֵם
	b	6		11		29	<i>din/āw/dmār/yā/ḥqu/štā/wkē/nin/ bkol/ med/dem</i>	דִּין אָו דְּמָאֵר יָא חֻק שְׁטָא וּכְעֵ נִין בְּקוֹל מֵד דֵּעַם
	11a	6	11	12	22	24	<i>War/yi/yin/men/dah/ḥā/wmen/ kē/fē/ ṭā/ḥā/ṭā</i>	וַאֵר יִי יִין מֵן דַּאָּה חָא וּמֵן כֵּעֵ פֵּעַ טָא חָא טָא
	b	5		10		20	<i>wah/lēn/men/deb/šā/wmen/kak/kā/ri/ṭā</i>	וַאֵה לֵעַן מֵן דֵּב שָׂא וּמֵן כַּאק כָּא רִי טָא
IV	12a	4	9	6	15	16	<i>Wāf/’aḇ/dāk/ nezd/har/ bhon</i>	וַאֵף אַב דַּאָּק נֵזַד חַאֵר בְּחוֹן
	b	5		9		17	<i>en/neṭ/’tar/’en/non/netp/ra/’sag/gi</i>	עַן נֵט אַרְעַן נֹן נֵט פַּרְעַן סַאג גִּי

psalm adopts a heterosyllabic pattern, deviating from the isosyllabic metrical pattern prevalent in classical Syriac poetry from the 4th century onwards.

The number of syllables, words, and consonants in each strophe gives the following tabulated result:

Strophes	Verses	Syllables	Words	Colometry
I	2–5b	63	31	141
II	5c–7	46	29	109
III	8–11	90	43	201
IV	12–14	50	27	106
V	15	19	10	50

When it comes to examining word counts, certain balanced relationships emerge. Notably, the first and second strophes collectively balance with the third and fourth strophes. This equilibrium in word distribution may serve to create a sense of structural harmony despite the variations in syllabic patterns. From a colometrical perspective, the study reveals interesting patterns. The second and fourth strophes demonstrate a balanced degree of consonantal length, indicating a potential rhythmic or auditory connection between these sections. Furthermore, a balanced colometry can be observed in the bicola of the first and second strophes.

Let us now turn to the Hebrew text. Below are the respective number of words, syllables and consonants in each colon and verse.

Strophes	Verses	Words	Words in verses	Syllables	Syllables in verses	Colometry		
I	2a	4	8	11	22	17	הש/ש/מ/ים/מ/ספ/פ/רים/כ/בוד/אל	השמים מספרים כבוד אל
	b	4		11		18	ו/מ/ע/שה/י/דיו/מג/גיד/ה/ר/קיע	ומעשה ידיו מגיד הרקיע
	3a	4	8	7	17	14	יום/ל/יום/יב/ביע/א/מר	יום ליום יביע אמר
	b	4		10		17	ו/לי/לה/ל/לי/לה/יחו/וה/ד/עת	ולילה ללילה יחוה דעת
	4a	4	7	8	14	15	אין/א/מר/ו/אין/ד/ב/רים	אין אמר ואין דברים
	b	3		6		11	ב/לי/נש/מע/קו/לם	בלי נשמע קולם
	5a	4	7	9	17	14	ב/כל/ה/א/רץ/י/צא/קו/לם	בכל הארץ יצא קולם
	b	3		8		13	ו/בק/צה/ת/בל/מל/לי/הם	ובקצה תבל מליהם
II	5c	4	4	8	8	12	ל/ש/מש/שם/א/הל/ב/הם	לשמש שם אהל בהם
	6a	4	8	11	20	16	ו/הוא/כ/ח/תן/י/צא/מ/חפ/פ/תו	והוא כחתן יצא מחפתו
	b	4		9		16	י/שיש/כ/גב/בור/ל/רוץ/א/רח	ישיש כגבור לרוץ ארח
	7a	3	9	9	26	14	מק/צה/הש/ש/מ/ים/מו/צ/או	מקצה השמים מוצאו
	b	3		9		14	ו/ת/קו/פ/תו/על/ק/צו/תם	ותקופתו על קצותם
	c	3		8		13	ו/אין/נס/תר/מ/חמ/מ/תו	ואין נסתר מחמתו

III	8a	3	10	7	25	13	תו/רת/ יה/וה/ ת/מי/מה	תורת יהוה תמימה
	b	2		5		8	מ/שי/בת/ נ/פש	משיבת נפש
	c	3		8		13	ע/דות/ יה/וה/ נ/א/מ/נה	עדות יהוה נאמנה
	d	2		5		9	מוח/כי/מות/ פ/תי	מחכימת פתי
	9a	3	10	8	25	14	פק/קו/די/ יה/וה/ י/ש/רים	פקודי יהוה ישרים
	b	2		5		7	מ/שמ/מ/חי/ לב	משמחי לב
	c	3		6		11	מצ/ות/ יה/וה/ ב/רה	מצות יהוה ברה
	d	2		6		10	מ/אי/רת/ עי/ג/ים	מאירת עינים
	10a	3	10	7	24	13	יר/את/ יה/וה/ ט/הו/רה	יראת יהוה טהורה
	b	2		5		8	עו/מ/דת/ ל/עד	עומדת לעד
	c	3		7		12	מש/פ/טי/ יה/וה/ א/מת	משפטי יהוה אמת
	d	2		5		8	צ/ד/קו/ יח/דו	צדקו יחדו
	11a	2	8	8	24	10	הנ/ח/מ/דיס/ מזו/הב	הנחמדים מזהב
	b	2		4		6	ו/מפ/פז/ רב	ומפז רב
	c	2		7		11	ו/מ/תו/קיס/ מד/ד/בש	ומתוקים מדבש
	d	2		5		9	ו/נ/פת/ צו/פיס	ונפת צופים
IV	12a	4	7	8	14	13	גס/ עב/ד/ך/ נו/הר/ ב/הם	גס עבדך נוהר בהם
	b	3		6		10	ב/שמ/רס/ ע/קב/ רב	בשמרם עקב רב
	13a	3	5	6	13	12	ש/גי/אות/ מי/ י/בין	שגיאות מי יבין
	b	2		7		11	מנ/נס/ת/רות/ נק/ק/ני	מנסתרות נקני
	14a	4	12	9	25	14	גס/מזו/ז/דיס/ח/שך/עב/דך	גס מזדים חשך עבדך
	b	3		5		9	אל/ ימ/ש/לו/ בי	אל ימשלו בי
	c	3		7		6	אז/ אי/תם/ ו/נק/קי/תי	אז איתם ונקיתי
	d	2		4		12	מפ/פ/שע/ רב	מפשע רב
V	15a	4	10	8	25	15	יה/יו/ ל/ר/צון/ אמ/רי/ פי	יהיו לרצון אמרי פי
	b	3		9		14	ו/הג/יון/ לב/בי/ ל/פ/ניך	והגיון לבי לפניך
	c	3		8		13	יה/וה/ צו/רי/ ו/ג/א/לי	יהוה צורי וגאלי

A comprehensive quantitative analysis of the Hebrew text of Ps 19 reveals intricate patterns and structural nuances within the psalm's composition. The study demonstrates a general equilibrium in syllabic and lexical distribution across cola and verses, with notable exceptions that merit further examination.

Particularly noteworthy is the third strophe (vv. 8–11), which exhibits remarkable symmetry at the syllabic level. When considered eight bicola, this strophe presents a near-perfect balance and an exceptionally consistent syllables pattern (12:13, 13:12, 12:13, 12:12), indicating a deliberate structural and symmetrical design. Considering the word ratio in verses, they showcase a consistent and balanced degree (10:10:10:8), which underscores the second strophe more and more.

Verses 11 and 14 deviate from the overall balance, suggesting the presence of a Qinah metre. This metrical variation may serve a specific poetic or rhetorical function within the broader structure of the psalm.

Comparative analysis with the Syriac version highlights the significance of vv. 8–11 in both textual traditions, underscoring their structural importance. In the Hebrew psalm, the number of consonants per colon tends to be more consistent than their Syriac counterparts, which favour a balanced colometrical ratio throughout the psalm. Additionally, vv. 8–11 of the Hebrew psalm consistently use the Qinah metre.

Regarding the strophes of the Hebrew psalm from the point of view of the number of words and syllables, the analysis shows that the first strophe consists of 70 syllables and 30 words, the second strophe contains 54 syllables and 21 words, the third strophe consists of 98 syllables and 38 words, and the fourth strophe contains 52 syllables and 24 words, and the fifth strophe contains 25 syllables and 10 words. Hence, the second and fourth strophes are balanced.

The analysis reveals that the first strophe contains 119 consonants and 30 words, the second strophe has 85 consonants and 21 words, the third strophe includes 162 consonants and 38 words, the fourth strophe comprises 87 consonants and 24 words, and the fifth strophe contains 42 consonants and 10 words. Based on this data, it can be concluded that there is a correlation between the second and fourth strophes in terms of the number of words and consonants.

The overall composition of the Hebrew text comprises 299 syllables distributed across 41 cola, yielding an average of 7.29 syllables per colon. The range of syllables per colon (4–11) and words per colon (2–4) indicates a degree of variability within a controlled framework.

In conclusion, while there is no direct correlation between strophes regarding syllable, word, or consonant counts, the intricate patterns observed—particularly in the second strophe—suggest a sophisticated poetic structure.

6. Conclusion

The Syriac text of Ps 19 employs various strophic markers to delineate the psalm into distinct structural units. These markers serve as textual signposts, guiding the reader through the psalm's thematic progression and structural organisation.

These markers include consonantal alliteration, semantic pairings and clusters, word repetition, and thematic shifts. Syntactical parallelism and the repetition of key terms, including the divine notion, also serve as structural indicators. The text utilises the waw copula as a connective device, sometimes forming inclusions to frame strophic units. Synonymous word series and complementary semantic elements further contribute to strophic demarcation. Additionally, vocative structures are employed, particularly to mark concluding sections. These diverse markers, used either individually or in combination, effectively segment the psalm into distinct strophes, enhancing its poetic structure and facilitating a clearer understanding of its thematic progression.

In summary, in the case of Ps 19, there are many similarities between the Hebrew text and the Syriac translation. The translator has respected parallelism, the location of verbs and the order of words in the verses. In addition, the translator was aware

of almost all poetic devices used by the Hebrew scribes, including some form of metre, repetition of words, symmetry, alliteration, and marking strophes with certain poetic features. It is noteworthy, however, that the Syriac translator has used the features in a slightly different manner.

A comparative analysis of Ps 19 and Ps 8 in their Hebrew and Syriac versions reveals both similarities and differences in their linguistic and stylistic features. Both psalms exhibit divergent versification between the Hebrew and Syriac texts, with the Syriac versions demonstrating a higher frequency of word repetition and often employing a single word to render multiple Hebrew words.

However, notable differences emerge in the treatment of parallelism and phonological features. Unlike Ps 8, where a higher ratio of parallelism was shown, Ps 19 displays less dominance of parallelism within the versions. Additionally, the Hebrew text of Ps 19 exhibits a lower ratio of word repetitions and alliteration compared to its Syriac counterpart, contrasting with Ps 8, where the Hebrew version demonstrated a higher incidence of sound repetition.

The Syriac translator strived to be as accurate and precise as possible, so they sometimes added or omitted some elements. Furthermore, The Syriac rendition of the text demonstrates a higher frequency of copulas at the onset of cola, indicating a preference for explicit syntactic connections. In contrast, the Hebrew version is more inclined towards asyndetic relationships between cola. This syntactic divergence reflects distinct stylistic approaches to clause connection and textual cohesion in Syriac and Hebrew poetic traditions.²³⁵ This feature of the Syriac translation technique should not be construed as having been derived from a different Hebrew *Vorlage*.²³⁶ This ensures that the translated version conveys the original message as faithfully as possible. To achieve a better style of word repetition within the text, the Syriac translator replaced some of the different Hebrew words with a single Syriac word. As such, the Syriac translation is distinct from the author of the Hebrew text in its style of word repetition.

The Syriac version exhibits a higher frequency of sound figures, suggesting a greater emphasis on phonetic patterning within its poetic structure. Additionally, the Syriac text demonstrates a more pronounced tendency towards word repetition. The consonant פ exhibits notable prominence in both the Hebrew and Syriac versions of the text. However, its significance is particularly pronounced in the Syriac rendition. The Syriac text demonstrates a higher frequency of פ-based phonological features, surpassing the Hebrew in two key aspects: alliteration and dominant sound patterns, as observed in Ps 8. In the second strophe, vv. 8–11, the פ-consonant is most prominently used.

The Hebrew Qinah metre survives in the Syriac text occasionally, but perhaps inadvertently, as this attribute is used to justify the length of cola by counting

²³⁵ It is interesting to note that Saenz Baddillos (1988, 60) argues that, both paratactically and hypotactically, Biblical poetry employs nominal clauses and asyndeton relatively frequently.

²³⁶ Carbajosa 2008, 38.

consonants, a method that is not the primary method of measurement used in Syriac poetry. According to the Hebrew authors of Ps 19, colometry is regarded as an established feature, at least in part. A noteworthy point is that the syllabic metrical pattern of the Hebrew text is more balanced than the colometrical ratio. All the verses are balanced, except for vv. 11 and 14. Examples of balanced instances include vv. 2 (11:11), 4 (8:6), 5 (9:8:8), and 7 (9:9:8). In contrast to colometry, the metre in the Syriac translation should be understood in terms of counting syllables. All the verses in the Syriac text are balanced. Examples of balanced instances include vv. 2 (10:9), 3 (8:8), 5 (8:8:7), 10 (11:11), and 11 (12:10).

In the Syriac text, each colon has an average of 8.64 syllables, whereas in Hebrew texts, the average is 7.29 syllables per colon.²³⁷ Although the discovery indicates that the metrical patterns and strophic structures are incompatible with those found in classical Syriac poetry, they share features such as word repetition, thematic coherence, parallelism, and occasional rhythmic and isosyllabic patterns. These similarities suggest a likely connection between the structure of P-Ps and characteristics found in classical Syriac poetry. The psalm contains strophes with a different number of cola and bears witness to the heterosyllabic metrical patterns.

²³⁷ The Syriac version maintains a relatively consistent average syllable count, closely aligning with the syllabic pattern observed in the Syriac rendition of Ps 8. In contrast, the Hebrew text exhibits a markedly lower average syllable count compared to its counterpart in Ps 8.

CHAPTER FOUR: PSALM 29

1. General information

There is a general consensus that Ps 29 is a hymn expressing praise for Yahweh's mighty power over all creation.²³⁸ The voice of Yahweh in a thunderstorm is described as a powerful appearance of Yahweh in vv. 3–9.²³⁹ The psalm contains a number of hymnic aspects: Yahweh's voice which sounds seven times in the storm (vv. 3–9), the heavenly court in which all heavenly beings gather and worship God (vv. 1–2), Yahweh's temple (v. 9c), as well as his enthronement as a king over מְבוֹל (v. 10). A strong pattern of repetition can be observed in the poem: phrases “the voice of Yahweh”, “ascribe to Yahweh”, and Yahweh are repeated several times. While the psalm can be classified as a hymn used in the worshipping community, its exact context in Israel's life and worship remains unclear.²⁴⁰

Psalm 29 is related to the ancient Canaanite poetry since it provides similar terminology and motifs, leading scholars to debate the exact relationship. The Canaanite background may serve as a polemic device to indicate that the Lord of Israel is more powerful than Baal, who was believed to be the storm deity during that period.²⁴¹ According to Craigie, the psalmist plagiarised the Canaanite language style in order to illustrate the victory and strength of God in comparison to the inimical Baal.²⁴²

The psalm is structured into three main parts. At the beginning and end of the psalm, vv. 1–2 and 10–11 emphasise God's sovereignty; vv. 3–9 in the middle illustrate God's glory and power.²⁴³ Psalm 29 is a perfect chapter for our study due to its rhythmic and regular form of strophes on the one hand, and its remarkable frequency of repetition of words on the other hand. Furthermore, Ps 29 provides a noteworthy composition that is particularly interesting for quantitative analysis.

²³⁸ Bellinger 1990, 81.

²³⁹ Kraus 1993, 1:345.

²⁴⁰ Craigie 2004, 243.

²⁴¹ VanGemeren 2008, 429.

²⁴² Craigie 2004, 246.

²⁴³ VanGemeren 2008, 429.

2. The text and strophic structure

2.1. The Syriac text

The text of Ps 29, according to the Leiden edition (1980) and its translation into English, is the following.²⁴⁴ The Roman numbers refer to the strophes, which will be explained below.

I	1a	Bring to the Lord young rams, ²⁴⁵	ܐܪܡܐ ܠܠܗܝ ܥܡ ܕܒܪܐ.
	b	bring to the Lord praise and honour.	ܐܪܡܐ ܠܠܗܝ ܥܡܝܬܐ ܡܕܝܢܐ.
	2a	Bring to the Lord the honour due to his name,	ܐܪܡܐ ܠܠܗܝ ܥܡܝܬܐ ܠܝܬܝܐ.
	b	worship the Lord in his holy court.	ܥܒܕܝܬܐ ܠܠܗܝ ܒܕܘܪܝܬܐ ܕܡܕܝܢܐ.
II	3a	The voice of the Lord is over the waters,	ܡܠܐ ܕܠܗܝ ܥܠ ܡܝܐ.
	b	the glorious God thunders forth,	ܥܠܡܐ ܕܡܕܝܢܐ ܝܥܒܕ.
	c	the Lord is over many waters.	ܠܗܝ ܥܠ ܡܝܐ ܥܝܠܐ.
	4	The voice of the Lord is strong, and the voice of the Lord is glorious.	ܡܠܐ ܕܠܗܝ ܥܠܡܐ ܡܠܐ ܕܠܗܝ ܥܠܡܐ ܕܡܕܝܢܐ.
III	5a	The voice of the Lord is that which breaks down the cedars,	ܡܠܐ ܕܠܗܝ ܕܡܕܝܢܐ ܕܡܕܝܢܐ.
	b	and the Lord breaks the cedars of Lebanon.	ܡܕܝܢܐ ܕܠܗܝ ܕܡܕܝܢܐ ܕܡܕܝܢܐ.
	6a	He makes them skip like calves,	ܝܡܐ ܕܡܕܝܢܐ ܕܡܕܝܢܐ.
	b	Lebanon and Sanir like young bulls.	ܠܠܒܢ ܡܕܝܢܐ ܕܡܕܝܢܐ ܕܡܕܝܢܐ.
IV	7	The voice of the Lord is that which divides the flame of fire.	ܡܠܐ ܕܠܗܝ ܕܡܕܝܢܐ ܕܡܕܝܢܐ.
	8a	The voice of the Lord is that which makes the desert tremble,	ܡܠܐ ܕܠܗܝ ܕܡܕܝܢܐ ܕܡܕܝܢܐ.
	b	and the Lord makes the desert of Kadesh tremble.	ܡܕܝܢܐ ܕܠܗܝ ܕܡܕܝܢܐ ܕܡܕܝܢܐ.
	9a	The voice of the Lord is that which makes the hinds tremble and uproots the forests,	ܡܠܐ ܕܠܗܝ ܕܡܕܝܢܐ ܕܡܕܝܢܐ ܕܡܕܝܢܐ.
	b	and in his temple, everyone utters praise.	ܡܕܝܢܐ ܕܠܗܝ ܕܡܕܝܢܐ ܕܡܕܝܢܐ.
V	10a	The Lord has turned back ²⁴⁶ the flood,	ܠܗܝ ܡܕܝܢܐ ܕܡܕܝܢܐ ܕܡܕܝܢܐ.
	b	the Lord sits as king forever.	ܠܗܝ ܡܕܝܢܐ ܕܡܕܝܢܐ ܕܡܕܝܢܐ.
	11a	The Lord will give strength to his people,	ܠܗܝ ܡܕܝܢܐ ܕܡܕܝܢܐ ܕܡܕܝܢܐ.
	b	the Lord will bless his people with peace.	ܠܗܝ ܡܕܝܢܐ ܕܡܕܝܢܐ ܕܡܕܝܢܐ.

²⁴⁴ The English translation is according to Taylor *et al.* (2020) but has been modified occasionally.

²⁴⁵ See Taylor *et al.* (2020, 99): “young rams”, literally “sons of rams” stands for MT בני אֱלִים ‘sons of gods’. Taylor’s contention is that the difference is the result of the similarity in the orthography between the two words in Hebrew. For the MT אֱלִים ‘gods’, the Syriac translator interpreted אֱלִים ‘rams’. But it might also be a pious emendation to avoid polytheistic connotations.

²⁴⁶ See Taylor *et al.* (2020, 101): for MT יָשָׁב ‘he sits’, the Syriac translator reads ܐܡܦܬܐ ‘he has turned back’. It seems that the difference is due to the wrong reading of the Syriac translator; the translator understood יָשָׁב as a Hiphil imperfect 3ms instead of יָשָׁב, which is Qal perfect 3ms.

The identification of strophic structures in Ps 29, despite the absence of clear demarcations in manuscripts, can be facilitated by recognising specific strophic indicators. We will divide the psalm into five distinct strophes: vv. 1–2, 3–4, 5–6, 7–9, and 10–11.

The initial strophe, encompassing vv. 1 and 2, is primarily delineated by the recurrence of the verb **בָּרַךְ** ‘bring’ in cola 1a, 1b and 2a, coupled with the consistent second-position placement of **לַיהוָה** across all four cola. The strophe exhibits morphological and syntactical uniformity (except for colon 2b), characterised by imperative verbs in the initial position (**בָּרַךְ** in 1a, 1b, 2a; **הַשְׁמַע** in 2b) and the direct object **לַיהוָה** with the preposition **לְ** in the second position, forming a cohesive closure. The third position consistently accommodates direct objects (1a, 1b, 2a). Furthermore, the repetition of **כְּבוֹד** ‘honour’ in cola 1b and 2a reinforces the strophic unity. Consequently, the strophe is shaped by both synonymous and syntactical parallelism.

Verses 3–4 constitute the second strophe, distinguished by the recurrent phrase **קוֹל יְהוָה** ‘the voice of the Lord’ at the onset of vv. 3 and 4 (2x), as well as the repetition of **לַיהוָה** in cola 3a, 3c and 4, of the phrase **הַיָּם הַגָּדוֹל** in cola 3a and 3c, and of the derivatives of the root **עָבַד** in cola 3b and 4. These verses use synonymous parallelism, with **קוֹל יְהוָה** in cola 3a and 4, creating an inclusion that enhances the strophic structure.²⁴⁷ The **מ**-alliteration of the words **לַיהוָה** (4x), **הַיָּם** (2x) and **מַעֲבִידֵם** further accentuates the strophe. Notably, two strophes in a row have the phrase in the beginning.

The third strophe, comprising vv. 5–6, is characterised by the repetition of ‘cedars’ in v. 5 **לִבְנוֹת** ‘Lebanon’ in cola 5b and 6b, forming a word pair with **סַנִּיר** ‘Sanir’ in one instance. Another prominent and synonymous word pair is **כִּלְבֵּי** ‘calves’ / **בָּנֵי בָקָר** ‘young bulls’ in v. 6a/b. The repetition of **לִבְנוֹת** ‘cedars’ in v. 5 and **לִבְנוֹת** in v. 6 further solidifies the strophic unity. These verses demonstrate synonymous parallelism, with triple **מ**- and sixfold **ל**- and **ב**-alliterations underscoring the strophe.

Verses 7–9 form the fourth strophe, primarily due to the frequent occurrence of **קוֹל יְהוָה** ‘the voice of the Lord’ at the beginning of cola 7, 8a and 9a. These verses share a common syntactic structure (except for colon 9b, which provides a closure) and exhibit thematic and semantic cohesion. The repetition of **הַיָּם הַגָּדוֹל** ‘he who makes tremble’ in cola 8a, 8b and 9a, along with **לִבְנוֹת** ‘desert’ in cola 8a and 8b, emphasises the strophic unity. The ninefold **מ**-alliteration further enhances the strophe’s cohesiveness.

The final strophe, encompassing vv. 10–11, is demarcated by the repetition of **לַיהוָה** in each colon, forming an inclusion in cola 10a and 11b. This is complemented by a sixfold **מ**-alliteration throughout the strophe. Both bicola in this strophe exemplify synonymous parallelism.

In terms of strophic composition, Ps 29 exhibits a balanced structure of four cola in most of the strophes, except five cola in the fourth strophe.

²⁴⁷ It is noteworthy that v. 4 comprises a long colon containing two parallel statements.

2.2. The Hebrew text

The Hebrew text and the English translation of the psalm are following:²⁴⁸

I	1a Ascribe to Yhwh, O sons of Gods,	הבו ליהוה בני אלים
	b ascribe to Yhwh glory and strength.	הבו ליהוה כבוד ועז
	2a Ascribe to Yhwh the glory of his name,	הבו ליהוה כבוד שמו
	b worship Yhwh in the majesty of holiness.	השתחו ליהוה בהדרת קדש
II	3a The voice of Yhwh is upon the water,	קול יהוה על המים
	b the God of glory thunders,	אל הכבוד הרעים
	c Yhwh is upon many waters.	יהוה על מים רבים
	4a The voice of Yhwh is powerful,	קול יהוה בכח
	b the voice of Yhwh is majestic.	קול יהוה בהדר
III	5a The voice of Yhwh breaks the cedars,	קול יהוה שבר ארזים
	b Yhwh breaks the cedars of Lebanon.	וישבר יהוה את ארזי הלבנון
	6a And He makes them skip like a calf,	וירקידם כמו עגל
	b Lebanon and Sirion like a young wild ox.	לבנון ושרין כמו בן ראמים
	7 The voice of Yhwh hews out flames of fire.	קול יהוה חצב להבות אש
IV	8a The voice of Yhwh makes the wilderness tremble,	קול יהוה יחיל מדבר
	b Yhwh makes the wilderness of Kadesh tremble.	יחיל יהוה מדבר קדש
	9a The voice of Yhwh makes the hinds tremble,	קול יהוה יחולל אילות
	b and strips the forest bare,	ויחשף יערות
	c and in his temple, all say: "Glory."	ובהיכלו כלו אמר כבוד
V	10a Yhwh sits over the flood,	יהוה למבול ישב
	b Yhwh sits as king forever.	וישב יהוה מלך לעולם
	11a Yhwh will give strength to his people,	יהוה עז לעמו יתן
	b Yhwh will bless his people with peace.	יהוה יברך את עמו בשלום

Given that textual criticism does not significantly impact the poetic analysis of Ps 29, the study of the psalm reveals a structure comprising five distinct strophes: vv. 1–2, 3–4, 5–7, 8–9, and 10–11.²⁴⁹ This structural proposition is supported by several linguistic and stylistic observations.

²⁴⁸ Regarding the English translation of the Hebrew text, I acknowledge the assistance of Bible.org, with the ESV, LSB, and NABRE being particularly helpful for my work.

²⁴⁹ Van der Lugt (2006, 294) divides the psalm into vv. 1–2, 3–4, 5–6, 7–9, 10–11; Fokkelman (2003, 46–48) and Terrien (2003, 273) vv. 1–2, 3–4, 5–7, 8–9, 10–11; Seybold (1996, 122–124) vv. 1–2, 3–10, 11.

Van der Lugt (2006, 294) presents additional strophic structures identified by various scholars: Briggs and Briggs (1906, 252–254), Jennings and Lowe (1884, 119) vv. 1–2, 3–4, 5–7, 8–9, 10–

The initial strophe, encompassing vv. 1–2, is delineated by the recurrence of **הבו** ‘ascribe’ at the onset of cola 1a, 1b and 2a, complemented by the consistent presence of the divine name **יהוה** in each colon. The verses exhibit not only synonymous parallelism but also a largely congruent syntactical structure.²⁵⁰ The repetition of **כבוד** ‘glory’ in vv. 1b and 2a further accentuates the strophic unity. Additionally, the fivefold **כ**- and **ק**-alliteration enhances the strophe’s phonetic cohesion, while the consonant **ה** creates an inclusion in cola 1a and 2b.

Verses 3–4 constitute the second strophe, characterised by the repetition of **קול** ‘voice’ in cola 3a, 4a and 4b, alongside the recurrent divine name in all cola. The phrase **קול יהוה** ‘the voice of Yhwh’ frames the strophe in vv. 3a and 4b, while the repetition of **מים** ‘waters’ encapsulates v. 3. Thematically and semantically, these verses are interconnected, alluding to Yahweh’s confrontation with water. Disregarding cola 3b, it is evident that both verses exemplify synonymous parallelism.

The third strophe, comprising vv. 5–7, is primarily demarcated by the inclusion formed by the phrase **קול יהוה** in vv. 5a and 7. Further cohesion is achieved through the repetition of **אריזים שבר** ‘to break cedars’ in v. 5 and **לבנון** ‘Lebanon’ in cola 5b and 6b. This strophe maintains synonymous parallelism, with the exception of v. 7, which lacks a precise counterpart. The similar syntax in v. 5a and 7, where **קול יהוה** is followed by participles, not only emphasises the strophe but also forms an inclusion. Notably, the sentences in vv. 5b and 6a, which do not contain participles, begin with a copula.

Verses 8–9 form the fourth strophe, distinguished by the recurrence of **קול יהוה** at the beginning of vv. 8 and 9, complemented by the repetition of **מדבר** ‘wilderness’ and **יחיל** ‘he makes tremble’ in cola 8a and 8b. The initial two bicola exemplify synonymous parallelism, while the final colon (9c) deviates from this structure, mirroring the pattern observed in the preceding strophe. Verses 8a and 9a are bound by similar syntax, whereas 9b and 9c contrast this pattern, potentially serving to highlight the strophe.

The final strophe, encompassing vv. 10–11, is accentuated through the repetition of **יהוה** in each colon, once again forming an inclusion. The dual occurrence of **עמו** his people in cola 11a and 11b further reinforces the repetitive pattern. Both bicola in this strophe are meticulously constructed as synonymous verses.²⁵¹

11; Kidner (2014, 142–143), Waltner (2006, 125–127) and Ross (2011, 651–652) vv. 1–2, 3–9, 10–11.

²⁵⁰ The phrase **בני אלים** ‘sons of gods’ in colon 1a functions as a vocative phrase; **כבוד ועז** ‘glory and strength’ in colon 1b and **כבוד שמו** ‘the glory of his name’ in colon 2a function as accusative phrase. However, **בהדרת קדש** ‘in the majesty of holiness’ is an adverbial phrase.

²⁵¹ Terrien’s strophic delineation of Ps 29 (2003, 273) is structured through consistent patterns of cola distribution, with each of the three main strophes (vv. 3–4, 5–7, 8–9) containing five cola. These strophes are marked by rhythmic variations, shifting from a base pattern of 2+2 to 3+3 in the second strophe and 3+2 in the third strophe. Additionally, each strophe exhibits a consistent pattern regarding the divine name, where the second colon of each strophe (3b, 5b, 8b) omits “the voice” but includes the divine name. The geographical progression of the storm serves as a

It is noteworthy that the first and last strophes, each containing four cola, create an overarching inclusion for the entire psalm.

3. Word repetition and sound figures

The investigation reveals that the Syriac translator follows the Hebrew choice of vocabulary. Therefore, **ܐܬܝܬ** ‘bring’ in vv. 1a, 1b and 2a renders **הָבּוּ**, **יְהוָה** ‘Lord’ with the highest number of occurrences (18 times) in vv. 1a, 1b, 2a, 2b, 3a, 3c, 4 (2x), 5a, 5b, 7, 8a, 8b, 9a, 10a, 10b, 11a and 11b **בְּנֵי**, **יְהוָה** ‘sons’ in vv. 1a and 6b **ܡܠܟܐ** (adjective/noun) ‘honour, glorious/praise’ in vv. 1b, 3b, 4 and 9b **ܡܠܟܐ** ‘voice’ in vv. 3a, 4 (2x), 5a, 7, 8a and 9a **ܡܝܡ** ‘waters’ in vv. 3a and 3c **ܠܒܢܢ** ‘cedars’ in vv. 5a and 5b **ܠܒܢܢ** ‘Lebanon’ in vv. 5b and 6a **ܬܪܝܡܐ** ‘tremble’ in vv. 8a, 8b and 9a **ܡܕܒܪܐ** ‘desert’ in vv. 8a and 8b **ܥܡܐ** ‘his people’ in vv. 11a and 11b **ܥܡܐ**.

Although the Syriac text follows the Hebrew word order and provides Syriac equivalents, in some cases, it deviates from repetition. Due to a different reading, the Syriac translator varies in colon 1b (**ܐܠܝܡ** instead of **ܐܠܝܡ**), uses **ܐܠܡܐ** for **ܐܠ** in colon 3b and renders **ܥܝܢ** in vv. 1b and 11a with two different words **ܐܝܢܐ** and **ܐܝܢܐ**. In vv. 2b and 4, the Syriac translator chooses **ܐܝܢܐ** and **ܐܝܢܐ** for **ܐܝܢܐ** and **ܐܝܢܐ** in vv. 5a and 5b for **ܐܝܢܐ**, and **ܐܝܢܐ** and **ܐܝܢܐ** for **ܐܝܢܐ** in vv. 10a and 10b. It is important to note that this type of translational diversity—introducing variation where the source text shows repetition—is relatively uncommon in Syriac translations of Hebrew texts.²⁵² Nonetheless, the Syriac text in vv. 4 and 11a interprets two different Hebrew words **ܐܝܢܐ** and **ܐܝܢܐ** with a single word **ܐܝܢܐ**. Likewise, in vv. 1b and 2a, the Syriac translator uses **ܐܝܢܐ** for **ܐܝܢܐ** and **ܐܝܢܐ**.

The Syriac translator of Ps 29 demonstrated a nuanced approach to rendering the Hebrew text, prioritising contextual accuracy over literal equivalence. This methodology reflects a sophisticated understanding of both the source and target

thematic marker, moving from its distant approach in Strophe I, through its fiery climax in Strophe II, to its aftermath in Strophe III. Based on Fokkelman’s analysis (2003, 45–490), his strophic delineation of Ps 29 is primarily determined by two main techniques: anaphora and duplication of the predicate. He structures the psalm into five strophes with a cola distribution pattern of 4-5-5-5-4. The strophic markers are clearly identified through anaphoric patterns: strophes 1, 2 and 5 feature triple anaphora, while strophes 3 and 4 contain double anaphora matching strophe 2’s pattern, resulting in the famous seven occurrences of “the voice of Yahweh.” Additionally, the duplication of predicates serves as a marker, specifically in the first verses of each strophe. This creates a systematic pattern where 13 out of 23 total cola begin with anaphora. The strophes (units 3 and 4) are distinguished by ending in a monocolon, making them slightly longer than the other strophes. This delineation is further supported by thematic progression and careful distribution of divine name occurrences throughout the strophes.

²⁵² Van Peursen 2007, 63. Weitzman (1999, 93) suggests that the Syriac translators aimed to reduce monotony by incorporating variation into the text.

languages, as well as a commitment to producing a translation that is both precise and accessible to the Syriac-speaking audience.

In the translation process, the scribe often opted for Syriac lexemes that, while not direct equivalents of their Hebrew counterparts, more accurately conveyed the contextual nuances of the original text. This strategy resulted in a target text that achieves a high degree of semantic fidelity while maintaining linguistic naturalness in the receptor language.

A notable characteristic of the Syriac rendition is its reduced lexical repetition compared to the Hebrew source text. This divergence in stylistic approach suggests a deliberate choice by the translator, possibly influenced by Syriac literary conventions or a desire to enhance the text's readability.

The following table illustrates the frequency of repetition of Hebrew and Syriac words.

Hebrew text	Syriac text
הבו (1a, 1b, 2a)	ܐܒܝܬܐ (1a, 1b, 2a)
יהוה (1a, 1b, 2a, 2b, 3a, 3c, 4 2x, 5a, 5b, 7, 8a, 8b, 9a, 10a, 10b, 11a, 11b)	ܕܝܗܘܐ (1a, 1b, 2a, 2b, 3a, 3c, 4 2x, 5a, 5b, 7, 8a, 8b, 9a, 10a, 10b, 11a, 11b)
	ܐܡܝܢܐ (1b, 2a)
בן (1a, 6b)	ܒܢ (1a, 6b)
על (3a, 3c)	ܥܠ (3a, 3c)
אל (1a, 3b)	
כבוד (1a, 2b, 3b, 9c)	ܥܒܕܐ (1a, 3b, 4, 9b)
עז (1b, 11a)	
הדר (2b, 4b)	
קול (3a, 4a, 4b, 5a, 7, 8a, 9a)	ܩܠ (3a, 4 2x, 5a, 7, 8a, 9a)
מים (3a, 3c)	ܡܝܐ (3a, 3c)
שבר (5a, 5b)	
	ܣܠܐ (4, 11a)
ארוזים (5a, 5b)	ܐܪܝܐ (5a, 5b)
לבנון (5b, 6a)	ܠܒܢܢ (5b, 6a)
	ܐܦܝ (6a, 6b)
יחיל (8a, 8b, 9a)	ܝܚܝܠ (8a, 8b, 9a)
מדבר (8a, 8b)	ܡܕܒܪܐ (8a, 8b)
ישב (10a, 10b)	
עמו (11a, 11b)	ܥܡܡܐ (11a, 11b)
89 words and 59 repetitions of 17 words	88 words ²⁵³ and 55 repetitions of 15 words

²⁵³ The morphosyntactic structure of Syriac psalms exhibits a notable divergence from their Hebrew counterparts, particularly in the realm of prepositional usage. In Syriac, prepositions are mostly independent lexical units, standing discretely from their associated words. This contrasts sharply with the Hebrew convention, where prepositions such as *ב* is typically affixed to the subsequent word as bound morphemes.

As illustrated in the table above, the Hebrew text exhibits a greater density of word repetition. This phenomenon is attributed to the differing interpretative approaches employed by the Syriac translator in cola 1b, 6a, and 1b, 11b, which result in variations in rendering the corresponding Hebrew text.

As for the sound figures and especially the alliteration, the fivefold $\aleph$ -alliteration at the beginning of cola 1a, 1b and 2a (ܐܠܗܝܡ) and in cola 1b and 2a (ܐܠܗܝܡ) highlights the strophe. Word repetition has a substantial impact on the alliteration in this strophe. As for the Hebrew text, a fivefold ה-alliteration in vv. 1a, 1b, 2a and 2b, accompanied by a small alliteration of consonants כ in cola 1b and 2a and ק in colon 2b, characterises the first strophe. Similarly to the Syriac text, the word repetition influences alliteration. The consonant ה occurring thirteen times adds vibrancy to the psalm in the Hebrew first strophe, building, unlike in its Syriac counterpart, an inclusion in cola 1a and 2b. The results show that the Hebrew first strophe benefits slightly more from the alliterative structure than its Syriac counterpart.

The phenomenon is equally vital in the second strophe where the seven-fold alliteration of פ in cola 3a and 3c (פܚܝܡ 2x, פܚܝܡ 2x), 3b (פܚܝܡ) and 4 (פܚܝܡ 2x) underscores the strophe. Accordingly, the Hebrew strophe draws attention because of פ identically at the beginning of cola 3a, 4a and 4b, paired with כ in cola 3b and 4a. Besides, the consonant ה, with its four instances of alliterative use, makes the second strophe remarkable. A significant difference between the Hebrew and Syriac texts is that the Hebrew text is characterised by inclusion through the consonant ק at the beginning of cola 3a and 4b. There is no doubt that the Syriac strophe is far less alliterative than the Hebrew text.

The triple פ-alliteration in cola 5a and 5b (פܚܝܡ 2x, פܚܝܡ), followed by consonants $\aleph$ and $\daleth$ in cola in 5a, 5b (ܐܠܗܝܡ), 6a and 6b (ܐܠܗܝܡ 2x, ܐܠܗܝܡ) represents the sound play in the third strophe. A triple $\daleth$ in cola 5b (ܐܠܗܝܡ) and 6b (ܐܠܗܝܡ) adds more colour to the strophe. As for the Hebrew text, through the specific use of consonant ק in cola 5a and 7, the third strophe is characterised by inclusion; the feature is absent from the Syriac strophe. In addition, the four-fold $\aleph$ -alliteration in cola 5a (ܐܠܗܝܡ), 5b (ܐܠܗܝܡ) and 7 (ܐܠܗܝܡ) along with γ in colon 6a (ܥܠܝܢ) emphasises the strophe.

The fourth strophe stands out for its ten-fold פ alliteration in cola 7 (פܚܝܡ), 8a (פܚܝܡ, פܚܝܡ, פܚܝܡ), 8b (פܚܝܡ, פܚܝܡ, פܚܝܡ) and 9a (פܚܝܡ, פܚܝܡ, פܚܝܡ). The four-fold $\aleph$ -alliteration in cola 7, 8a, 9a (ܐܠܗܝܡ) and 8b (ܐܠܗܝܡ) along with γ in colon 9b (ܥܠܝܢ) emphasises the fourth strophe. The Hebrew authors also highlight the fourth strophe through the five-fold ק- and כ-alliteration. In the Hebrew text, the eight-fold י-alliteration in cola 8a, 8b (יְהוָה), 9a (יְהוָה) and 9b (יְהוָה) underscores the strophe. Anew, alliteration has been influenced by word repetition.

This distinctive feature of Syriac syntax engenders significant implications for the textual composition. Primarily, it results in a substantial augmentation of the overall word count within the psalm. Moreover, this syntactic peculiarity precipitates a marked increase in lexical repetitions. A salient illustration of this phenomenon is observed in the frequent recurrence of certain prepositions, notably γ (appearing twice).

The fifth strophe with a six-fold **ܟ**-alliteration in cola 10a (ܟܠܟܠܟܠܟܠܟܠܟܠܟܠ), 10b (ܟܠܟܠܟܠܟܠܟܠܟܠܟܠ), 11a and 11b (ܟܠܟܠܟܠܟܠܟܠܟܠܟܠ), particularly at the beginning of cola 10a, 11a and 11b highlights the strophe. As for Hebrew, an eight-fold **י**-alliteration in cola 10a, 10b (יְהוָה 2x, יֵשׁב 2x), 11a (יְתֵן, יְהוָה) and 11b (יְבַרֵךְ, יְהוָה) characterises the strophe. Notably, consonants **ܟ** and **י** specifically build inclusion in both the Syriac and Hebrew strophes.

A comparative analysis of the Hebrew and Syriac versions of Ps 29 reveals that both texts employ significant word repetition and alliteration as key poetic devices. These linguistic features serve a dual purpose, functioning not only as aesthetic elements but also as structural markers delineating strophic boundaries in both renditions.

However, the frequency and distribution of these poetic devices differ between the two versions. The Hebrew text generally demonstrates a higher incidence of both alliteration and word repetition, suggesting a more pronounced emphasis on these stylistic elements. This disparity may be attributed to the inherent linguistic characteristics of Hebrew and Syriac or to conscious choices made by the Syriac translator in adapting the text to target language conventions.

The phonetic analysis of both texts unveils distinct soundscapes. The Syriac version exhibits a notable predilection for the **ܟ**-consonant, particularly evident in the fourth and fifth strophes. This phonetic focus creates a unique auditory experience in the target language, with other consonants playing a comparatively minor role in the overall sound pattern.

Conversely, the Hebrew text presents a different phonetic profile. While it also demonstrates specific soundscapes, the consonants **ה** and **י** emerge as more prominent. This divergence in consonantal emphasis between the two versions underscores the challenges and creative opportunities inherent in translating poetry across linguistically diverse systems.

Both texts employ consonantal inclusion, a poetic device where similar sounds frame a textual unit. However, this technique is more pronounced and readily discernible in the Hebrew version compared to its Syriac counterpart. This observation further highlights the subtle yet significant differences in the poetic strategies employed in the source and target texts.

4. Parallelism and syntax in the Syriac psalm

An analysis of Ps 29 in Hebrew and Syriac versions reveals a predominant use of synonymous parallelism. However, v. 9 in both versions presents a notable exception, demonstrating a more complex structure. In the Hebrew text, while the first two cola of v. 9 maintain synonymous parallelism, the third colon introduces an extrapolative element. The comparative analysis indicates that the Syriac translation generally adheres to the Hebrew original, explaining the similar frequency of synony-

mous parallelism in both versions.²⁵⁴ Such fidelity suggests the Syriac translator's awareness and intentional preservation of the Hebrew text's structural nuances.

Examining the strophic structure of the Hebrew text reveals a distinctive pattern. The second (vv. 3–4), third (vv. 5–7) and fourth (vv. 8–9) strophes exhibit a regular and rhythmic form, each comprising five cola. This regularity contributes significantly to the unique poetic profile of Ps 29. Furthermore, the structural symmetry is enhanced by the occurrence of the divine name Yahweh four times in both the first (vv. 1–2) and fifth (vv. 10–11) strophes. This repetition creates an envelope structure, with the first and fifth strophes of four cola encapsulating three five-cola strophes. In contrast, the Syriac version primarily consists of four-cola strophes, with only the fourth strophe containing five cola. This structural divergence underscores the distinct poetic approaches in the two linguistic traditions while maintaining the psalm's fundamental formal attributes.

Deviations from synonymous parallelism are observable in specific instances within the Syriac version. Verse 10 diverges due to its unique rendition, while vv. 4 and 7 stand out as monocola, contrasting with their Hebrew counterparts, which are bicola exhibiting synonymous parallelism.²⁵⁵ Generally, the Syriac text adheres to the Hebrew word order, with exceptions occurring when elements are excluded, added, or syntactically restructured. These modifications in the Syriac version appear to be motivated by a desire for increased precision and enhanced comprehensibility.

²⁵⁴ Van Peursen (2007, 67) indicates that parallelism mainly derives from the Hebrew original.

²⁵⁵ However, v. 4 translates a Hebrew bicolon and has parallelism in it.

5. Quantitative poetic analysis

The following table shows the results of the quantitative analysis of the Syriac psalm according to the Leiden edition.

Strophes	Verses	Words	Words in verses	Syllables	Syllables in verses	Colometry	Transliteration	Hebrew
I	1a	4	8	7	16	16	'ay/taw/lmār/yā/ḥnay/dek/rē	אָהב לַחַי כִּן דִּבֶּר.
	b	4		9	20		'ay/taw/lmār/yā/šub/hā/wi/qā/rā	אָהב לַחַי אַעֲשֶׂה כִּסּוּסָא דְּמִיָּה.
	2a	4	8	9	16	18	'ay/taw/lmār/yā/'i/qā/rā/laš/mēh	אָהב לַחַי דְּמִיָּה לַחֲמִשָּׁה.
	b	4		7	21		syod/ lmār/yā/ ḥdār/tā/dqud/šēh	שְׂפֹדָה לַחַי כִּדְּחִי דְּמִיָּה דְּמִיָּה.
II	3a	4	11	7	21	13	Qā/lēh dmār/yā/ 'al/ may/yā	מִלֵּה דִּמְרָה עַל יָדָה.
	b	3		6	12		'a/lā/hā/ mšab/hā/ r' em	אֶלְמָה מְשַׁבֵּחַ יָחַד.
	c	4		8	14		Mār/yā/ 'al/ may/yā/ sag/gi/yē	יָדָה עַל יָדָה שְׂפֹדָה.
	4	6	6	12	12	28	Qā/lēh/dmār/yā/ḥḡay/lā/wqā/lēh/ dmār/yā/ ḥšub/hā	מִלֵּה דִּמְרָה חֲשִׁבָה מִלֵּה דִּמְרָה עֲשִׂיבָה.
III	5a	4	8	9	17	17	Qā/lēh/dmār/yā/ḡam/ḥa/t/ṭef/'ar/zē	מִלֵּה דִּמְרָה דְּחִפּוּף אֶרֶץ.
	b	4		8	17		wā/ḡar/ mār/yā/ 'ar/zē/ dleb/nān	וְחִפּוּף יָדָה אֶרֶץ דְּלֵב.
	6a	4	9	7	16	14	Raq/qeḏ/ 'en/non/ 'aḡ/ 'ey/lē	רִיק אֶרֶץ אֶתְּלָה.
	b	5		9	21		lleḡ/nān/ wal/sā/nir/ 'aḡ/ bnay/ ray/mā	לְלֵב מְלִיטָה אֶתְּלָה כִּן יִסָּר.
IV	7	5	5	12	12	24	Qā/lēh/dmār/yā/ḡfā/seq/šal/hē/ḡi/ṭā/ ḡnu/rā	מִלֵּה דִּמְרָה דְּפִי מְשַׁבֵּחַ דְּמִיָּה.
	8a	4	8	8	16	18	Qā/lēh/ dmār/yā/ ḡam/zi 'maḡb/rā	מִלֵּה דִּמְרָה דְּמָגֵב מְדִבֶּר.
	b	4		8	18		wam/zi ' mār/yā/maḡb/rā/ḡqV/deš	וְמָגֵב יָדָה מְדִבֶּר דְּמִיָּה.
	9a	6	10	14	23	26	Qā/lēh/dmār/yā/ḡam/zi ' 'ay/lā/ṭā/ wam/ 'aq/qar/ 'ā/ḡē	מִלֵּה דִּמְרָה דְּמָגֵב אֶלְמָה מְחַפֵּי חֶבֶד.
	b	4		9	19		wab/hayk/lēh/kol/nāš/'ā/mar/šub/hā	וְכַפְּכַל חַלֵּק אֶתְּלָה אֶרֶץ.
V	10a	3	7	7	15	13	Mār/yā/ mā/mo/lā/ ah/peḡ	יָדָה מְחַפֵּי אֶתְּלָה.
	b	4		8	15		yi/ṭeḡ/ mār/yā/ mal/ka/ l'ā/lam	יָחַד יָדָה חֲלָק לְחַלֵּק.
	11a	4	8	8	17	15	Mār/yā/ net/tel/ ḡay/lā/ l' am/mēh	יָדָה שֶׁלֵּל לְחַמֵּשׁ.
	b	4		9	17		mār/yā/nḡar/reḡl' am/mēh/baš/lā/mā	יָדָה נִגְרִי לְחַמֵּשׁ כְּלֵמָה.

An analysis of the text of Ps 29 in Syriac reveals a complex structural composition comprising eight bicola, two monocola, and one tricolon. This structure can be

delineated into five distinct strophes, each with unique syllabic and word arrangements.

The initial strophe in vv. 1–2 consists of two bicola. Each bicolon demonstrates a balanced structure with 16 syllables and 8 words, exhibiting a remarkable symmetry in both syllabic and lexical composition.

The second strophe presents a more varied structure. Verse 3 is composed of a tricolon with 21 syllables and 11 words, while v. 4 is a monocolon containing 12 syllables and 6 words. This strophe thus deviates from the symmetrical pattern observed in the first.

The third strophe reverts to a more balanced structure, comprising two bicola. The first bicolon contains 17 syllables and 8 words, while the second has 16 syllables and 9 words, maintaining a near-equilibrium in syllabic and word count.

The fourth strophe exhibits the most complex structure. It includes two bicola in vv. 8 and 9, with 16 and 23 syllables, and 8 and 10 words, respectively. Additionally, v. 7 presents a monocolon of 12 syllables and 5 words, introducing an asymmetrical element to this strophe.

The final strophe returns to a more balanced configuration, consisting of two bicola in vv. 10 and 11. These bicola contain 15 and 17 syllables and 7 and 8 words, respectively, approximating the symmetry observed in earlier strophes.

This analysis reveals that only the first, third and fifth strophes maintain a consistent syllabic and word balance within their verses. However, the colometrical analysis presents a more nuanced picture. Verses 5 and 8 demonstrate perfect balance with a 17:17 and 18:18 consonant ratio, respectively. Verses 2, 3, 10 and 11 tend towards adjusted cola lengths, with ratios of 18:21, 13:12:14, 13:15 and 15:17, respectively.

The psalm's structure is further emphasised by vv. 1, 2, 5, 8 and 11, along with 4:4 words, hence, all of which consist of 8 words. Moreover, the majority of verses (1, 2, 5, 6, 8, 10, 11) contain between 15–17 syllables, contributing to the overall rhythmic consistency of the psalm.

The range of syllables per colon varies from 6 to 12, while the word count per colon ranges from 3 to 6. The Syriac psalm contains 181 syllables distributed across 21 cola, resulting in an average of 8.61 syllables per colon. It is noteworthy that all strophes, except the fourth, maintain an equal number of cola, further contributing to the psalm's structural cohesion.

The number of syllables, words and consonants in strophes gives the following tabulated result:

Strophes	Verses	Syllables	Words	Colometry
I	1–2	32	16	75
II	3–4	33	17	67
III	5–6	33	17	69
IV	7–9	51	23	105
V	10–11	32	15	60

An analysis of the structural composition of Ps 29 in Syriac reveals intricate patterns in syllabic and lexical distribution across its strophes. The data indicates that the first, second, third and fifth strophes exhibit a remarkable degree of balance in terms of syllable and word count. This equilibrium is particularly noteworthy as it contributes to the overall rhythmic cohesion of the psalm.

Of particular interest is the structural relationship between the first and fifth strophes. These strophes, characterised by their balanced syllabic counts, form an inclusion. This literary device effectively frames the entire psalm, creating a sense of completeness and circularity in its composition.

The colometrical analysis provides further insights into the psalm's structure. The second and third strophes demonstrate comparable lengths and a balanced structure. However, it is essential to note that this balance is achieved despite the presence of incongruent quantities of syllables and words per colon within these strophes.

A significant observation pertains to the metrical framework employed in this psalm. The analysis reveals a heterosyllabic metrical pattern, which stands in contrast to the isosyllabic metrical pattern that became predominant in classical Syriac poetry.

Let us now turn to the Hebrew text. The following table illustrates the respective number of syllables and words in each colon as well as in each verse. In addition, the colometrical results are presented.

Strophes	Verses	Words	Words in verses	Syllables	Syllables in verses	Colometry		
I	1a	4	8	9	18	15	הבו/ ליהוה/ ב/ני/ א/לים	הבו ליהוה בני אלים
	b	4		9		15	הבו/ ליהוה/ כ/בוד/ ו/עז	הבו ליהוה כבוד ועז
	2a	4	8	9	21	15	הבו/ ליהוה/ כ/בוד/ ש/מו	הבו ליהוה כבוד שמו
	b	4		12		19	הש/ת/ח/ווי/ ליהוה/ ב/הד/רת/ ק/דש	השתחו ליהוה בהדרת קדש
II	3a	4	11	7	20	13	קול/ יהוה/ על/ המ/מים	קול יהוה על המים
	b	3		6		12	אל/ הכ/בוד/ הר/עים	אל הכבוד הרעים
	c	4		7		13	יהוה/ על/ מים/ רב/בים	יהוה על מים רבים
	4a	3	6	5	11	10	קול/ יהוה/ בכ/בכ	קול יהוה בכ
	b	3		6		11	קול/ יהוה/ ב/ה/דר	קול יהוה בהדר
III	5a	4	9	8	20	15	קול/ יהוה/ ש/בר/ א/רזים	קול יהוה שבר ארזים
	b	5		12		21	וי/שב/בר/יהוה/את/אר/זי/הל/ל/ב/נון	וישבר יהוה את ארזי הלבנון
	6a	3	8	8	20	13	וי/יר/קי/דם/ כ/מו/ ע/גל	וירקידם כמו עגל
	b	5		12		20	ל/ב/נון/ ו/שר/יז/ כ/מו/ בן/ר/א/מים	לבנון ושרין כמו בן ראמים
	7	5	5	9	9	17	קול/ יהוה/ ח/צב/ ל/ה/בות/ אש	קול יהוה חצב להבות אש

IV	8a	4	8	7	15	15	קול/ יהוה/ יחיל/ מד/בר	קול יהוה יחיל מדבר
	b	4		8		15	יחיל/ יהוה/ מד/בר/ ק/דש	יחיל יהוה מדבר קדש
	9a	4	10	9	27	17	קול/ יהוה/ יחו/לל/ אי/ילות	קול יהוה יחולל אילות
	b	2		7		10	וי/ח/שף/ י/ע/רות	ויחשף יערות
	c	4		11		17	ו/ב/הי/כ/לו/ כל/לו/ א/מר/ כ/בוד	ובהיכלו כלו אמר כבוד
V	10a	3	7	7	17	12	יהוה/ למו/מב/בול/ י/שב	יהוה למבול ישב
	b	4		10		16	וי/י/שב/ יהוה/ מ/לך/ ל/עו/לם	וישב יהוה מלך לעולם
	11a	4	9	8	18	13	יהוה/ עז/ ל/עמ/מו/ ית/תן	יהוה עז לעמו יתן
	b	5		11		18	יהוה/י/ב/רך/את/עמ/מו/בש/ש/לום	יהוה יברך את עמו בשלום

A comprehensive colometrical analysis of the Hebrew text of Ps 29, focusing on syllable and word distribution, reveals a structural composition that differs from its Syriac counterpart. The colometrical ratio in the Hebrew version demonstrates balance only in vv. 1, 3, 4 and 8, while syllabic equilibrium is observed in vv. 1, 3, 4, 8, 10 and 11. This contrasts with the Syriac text, which exhibits a more consistent balance in both syllable count and colometry. The Hebrew text's syllabic range is less regular than the Syriac version, indicating distinct compositional approaches in these two linguistic traditions.

An examination of the strophic structure of the Hebrew text reveals the following quantitative data: the first strophe comprises 16 words and 39 syllables, the second strophe contains 17 words and 31 syllables, the third strophe consists of 22 words and 49 syllables, the fourth strophe includes 18 words and 42 syllables, and the fifth strophe features 16 words and 35 syllables.

This analysis indicates a notable balance among the first, second and fifth strophes, suggesting a deliberate structural arrangement. The colometrical analysis of the strophes highlights a perfect balance between the second and fifth strophes, contributing to the overall structural cohesion of the psalm. A particularly significant feature is the inclusion formed by the first and fifth strophes. These strophes exhibit a balanced word count (16 words each) and a near-balanced syllable count (39 and 35 syllables, respectively). This framing device effectively encapsulates the entire psalm, enhancing its structural integrity and poetic sophistication.

The Hebrew text demonstrates a range of 5–12 syllables and 3–5 words per colon. In total, the psalm comprises 196 syllables distributed across 23 cola, resulting in an average of 8.52 syllables per colon.

6. Conclusion

The Syriac translator of Ps 29 employed a variety of strophic markers to delineate the five distinct strophes, demonstrating a sophisticated approach to poetic structure. These markers can be enumerated as follows: (1) lexical repetition, (2) syntactical parallelism, (3) thematic coherence, (4) word pairs and associated vocabulary, (5) alliteration, (6) inclusion, (7) transitional phrases, (8) semantic cohesion, and

(9) structural symmetry. These diverse markers collectively contribute to the psalm's poetic profile, facilitating strophic identification despite the absence of explicit demarcations in the Syriac manuscripts. The translator's use of these techniques demonstrates a deep understanding of both the original Hebrew poetic structure and Syriac poetic conventions, resulting in a translation that preserves the psalm's structural integrity while adapting it to the target language.

This comparative analysis of Ps 29 in P-Ps and MT Hebrew versions reveals a sophisticated interplay between translation fidelity and poetic adaptation. The Syriac rendition generally adheres to the word order of the Hebrew original, demonstrating the translator's profound comprehension of the source text. This approach resulted in a translation that balances faithfulness to the original with aesthetic appeal in the target language.

The Syriac text exhibits a range of poetic features, indicating the translator's awareness and intentional preservation of Hebrew scribal poetic techniques. These include parallelism, word repetition, alliteration, and strophic demarcation. However, the Syriac version employs these elements with subtle variations, suggesting an independent approach to poetic rendering.

Parallelism, alliteration, and word repetition emerge as the most prominent poetic qualities in both versions. While maintaining these features, the Syriac text displays a lower frequency of alliteration and word repetition compared to its Hebrew counterpart. Despite this reduction, the Syriac version retains appreciable poetic qualities.

Our quantitative analysis of Ps 29 yields significant insights. While colometrical analysis proves valuable for understanding Hebrew poetry, syllabic analysis reveals a more balanced and consistent metre in both versions. The Syriac translator, whether intentionally or not, acknowledges colometrical balance but prioritises syllabic count as the primary metrical principle. This is evidenced by the precise consonantal balance in vv. 5 and 8 (17:17 and 18:18, respectively) and the syllabic adjustments in vv. 2, 3, 10 and 11 (18:21, 13:12:14, 13:15 and 15:17, respectively).

The psalm's structure is further defined by specific verses (1, 2, 5, 8, 11) that adhere to a 4:4 word pattern and consist of eight words each. Most verses (1, 2, 5, 6, 8, 10, 11) maintain a syllable count between 15 and 17, reinforcing the poem's form and framework. The Syriac version has an average of 8.61 syllables per colon, while the Hebrew contains 8.52 syllables per colon.

While the findings indicate that the metrical patterns and strophic structures are not entirely congruent with those found in classical Syriac poetry from the 4th century onwards, they share features such as lexical repetition, thematic coherence, parallelism, and occasional rhythmic and isosyllabic patterns. These similarities suggest a potential connection between the structure of P-Ps and characteristics observed in classical Syriac poetry.

In conclusion, Ps 29 exhibits strophes with equal cola counts, except for the fourth strophe, demonstrating a heterosyllabic metrical pattern.

CHAPTER FIVE: PSALM 86

1. General information

In this psalm, an individual prays for protection against enemies who are trying to destroy him.²⁵⁶ The psalm should be dated to the post-exilic era and even considered one of the youngest psalms. The psalm was added to the Psalter after the Korahite psalms (84, 85, 87, 88) had already been integrated, and the psalm itself is a non-Korahite psalm.²⁵⁷ The present arrangement of the psalm is deemed illogical by some researchers who advocate for the relocation of vv. 8 to 13 after vv. 14–17.²⁵⁸

Tate claims that the psalm is commonly divided into two segments: vv. 1–13 and 14–17.²⁵⁹ There is a bit more complexity to this structure than that of two divisions. After lamenting in vv. 1–7, praise opens in vv. 8–10. In vv. 11 and 13, the request is to be taught by Yahweh, followed by thanksgiving and praise.²⁶⁰ Psalm 86 is an exemplary piece of literature characterised by a considerable percentage of word repetition. As a result, numerous studies have been conducted on this psalm, with the purpose of identifying recurrent configurations and advocating for a deliberate construction of symmetry, be it concentric or not, as the fundamental structure of the entire psalm.²⁶¹

2. The text and strophic structure

2.1. The Syriac text

The following is the text of Ps 86 according to the Leiden edition (1980) and its translation into English.²⁶² The Roman numbers refer to the strophes, which will be discussed below.

²⁵⁶ Bratcher and Reyburn 1991, 751.

²⁵⁷ Nõmmik and Põldsam 2018, 408.

²⁵⁸ Bratcher and Reyburn 1991, 751.

²⁵⁹ Tate 1990, 377.

²⁶⁰ Ibid.

²⁶¹ Some of them are referred to here: Giavini 1966, Vorndran 2002, Fidanzio 2010.

²⁶² The English translation is according to Taylor et al. (2020) but have been modified occasionally.

- I 1a Incline your ear, O Lord, and answer me, ע לר זכור אדניך מחסר.
b for I am poor and needy. חפלא דחשכא ארע חסעא.
2a Guard my life, for you are good,²⁶³ חפלא לנפשי חפלא דילא ארע.
b save your servant, O God, who hopes in you. פדום לחדתיך ארע ארמא דחשכא חיי.
3a Have mercy on me, O Lord, זסר חל זכור.
b for I cry out to you throughout all day. חפלא דלחתיך ארמא בחלמך.
4a Gladden the life of your servant, שדא נפשי דחדתיך.
b for I have lifted myself to you, O Lord. חפלא דלחתיך זכור אדניך נפשי.
5a For you, O Lord, are good, חפלא דארע זכור פא ארע.
b your grace is abundant to all who cry out to you. מספיקא ארע לחת דנפח ליי.
6a Give ear, O Lord, to my prayer, ע שד זכור ע ללח.
b listen to the sound of my groaning. מסעבא חלמא דלח.
- II 7 In the day of my distress, I cried out to you, and חשכא דארמא לר פדומיך מחסר.
you answered me.
8 There is none like you, O Lord, our God, and לח ארעתיך זכור ארמא מלכא ארע חבדיך.
there are no works like yours.
9a All the peoples that you have made חלמא חכמא דחבדיך.
b will come and worship you, O Lord, אדחא מספיקא ליי זכור.
c they will praise your name, for you are great, מספיקא לעבדך חפלא דזכ ארע.
10 You do wondrous things, O God, you alone! חבד ארע דחזיתך ארע ארמא חלמא דיי.
11a Show me your way, O Lord, and I will walk in truth שד זכור אדניך ארמא חפלא חסעא.
b may my heart rejoice with those who fear your name. שדא לר ארמא דדלמ לעבדך.
12a I will give thanks to you, O Lord, my God, with ארמא ליי זכור ארמא חל חל לר.
all my heart,
b I will praise your name forever. מסעבא עבדך ללח.
- III 13a For your graciousness to me is great, חפלא דלחתיך חפלא חל.
b and you have delivered my life from the depths of Sheol. נפשי מל נפשי חל עמל דשדא ארע.
14a O God, the wicked have arisen against me, ארמא חלמא מלח חל.
b and the assembly of the mighty have sought my life, חלמא ארע דחכמא חכמא לנפשי.
c and they have not remembered you. מל אדחזיבתיך.
15a But you, O Lord, O God, are merciful and ארע זכור ארמא חזכא חזכא.
compassionate,
b long suffering and abundant in grace and truth. חל זכור ארמא חפלא חפלא חפלא.

²⁶³ Colon 2a, which reads כִּי־יִחְסִיד אֲנִי in the MT text, has been interpreted as “for I am a pious man”, whereas the Syriac text employs the phrase חפלא דילא ארע ‘for you are good’. The rationale behind the Syriac translator’s decision to use this rendering is unclear, although it appears to be a theological revision of sorts. It is worth noting that P rarely employs the term שד in its translations, as it usually opts for חבד ‘chosen’ or דלמ ‘honest, righteous’ (cf. Ps 116:15, 37:28, 4:3, 16:10). However, in this instance, the translator has disregarded the human element entirely, choosing instead to make reference to God.

IV 16a	Turn to me and be merciful to me,	הֲשִׁיבָה לִּי חַסְדְּךָ יְיָ.
b	grant strength to your servant and save the son of your maidservant.	וְתַעֲזָרְךָ לַעֲבָדְךָ יְיָ וְתַשְׁׁכֵּם לְבָבְךָ יְיָ.
17a	Give me a good sign,	חַסְדְּךָ יְיָ הַחֲזִקְנִי.
b	so that my foes might see and be ashamed.	וְיִשְׁמְחוּ וְיִשְׁתָּבְחוּ וְיִשְׁתָּבְחוּ.
c	For you, O Lord, have helped me and comforted me.	וְאַתָּה יְיָ חֲזַקְתָּ וְנִחַמְתָּ.

Psalm 86 consists of four strophes in vv. 1–6, 7–12, 13–15 and 16–17. The first strophe can be considered in vv. 1–6 due to the repetition of following words: הֲשִׁיבָה ‘Lord’ in cola 1a, 3a, 4b, 5a and 6a; חַסְדְּךָ ‘for’ in cola 1b, 2a, 3b, 4b and 5a; נַפְשִׁי ‘soul’ in cola 2a, 4a and 4b; טוֹב ‘good’ 2a and 5a; הִצֵּאתִי ‘cry out’ in cola 3b and 5b; עַבְדְּךָ ‘your servant’ in cola 2b and 4a. Besides, the frequent use of imperative verbs at the beginning of cola 1a, 2a, 2b, 3a, 4a, 6a and 6b emphasises the strophe and binds verses to each other. Moreover, the imperatives found in vv. 1a and 6b create an inclusion within the strophe.

The second strophe can be considered in vv. 7–12 owing to the repetition of עָשֵׂה ‘to do’ in cola 8, 9a and 10; הֲשִׁיבָה ‘Lord’ in 8, 9b, 11a and 12a, and עֲבַדְתָּ לְשִׁמְךָ ‘praise your name’ in cola 9c and 12b (עֲבַדְתָּ also in 11b). Moreover, the frequent use of הֲשִׁיבָה and עָשֵׂה at the initial position of words within the second strophe highlights it. It is clear that a thematic shift starts in the second strophe and exhibits an independent topic. Verses seem to be bound through the use of vocative tone of words, including הֲשִׁיבָה and עָשֵׂה.

Verses 13–15 as the third strophe are framed by the inclusion of the word pair חַסְדְּךָ ‘grace’ / עֲשֵׂה ‘be abundant’ in 13a and 15b. Additionally, the word נַפְשִׁי ‘my soul’ is repeated in cola 13b and 14b. Furthermore, the frequent use of copula at the beginning of cola 13b, 14b, 14c and 15a strengthens the strophe. The word חַסְדְּךָ plays a transitional marker here and serves as a complementary reasoning for the previous strophe.

The fourth strophe consists of vv. 16–17, firstly, because of the frequent use of הֲשִׁיבָה- and עָשֵׂה-alliteration and, secondly, because of the frequent application of the pronominal suffix , ‘to me, for me’. Besides, the five-fold use of the imperative forms הֲשִׁיבָה ‘turn’, נִסְתַּח ‘be merciful’, תַּעֲזָר ‘grant’, תַּשְׁכֵּם ‘save’ and חַסְדְּךָ ‘make (give)’ in vv. 16a (2x), 16b (2x) and 17a marks the strophe and, simultaneously, connects the psalm’s ending to its initial strophe with its seven imperatives.

As for the strophic formation, Ps 86 is composed of twelve cola in the first strophe, ten cola in the second strophe, seven cola in the third strophe, and five cola in the fourth strophe.

2.2. The Hebrew text

The Hebrew MT text of Ps 86 and its English translation are the following:²⁶⁴

I	²⁶⁵ 1a Incline your ear, O Yhwh, and answer me,	הטה־יהוה אזנך ענני
	b for I am afflicted and needy.	כִּי־עני ואביון אני
	2a Preserve my soul, for I am a pious man,	שמרה נפשי כִּי־חסיד אני
	b O you my God, save your servant who trusts in you.	הושע עבדך אתה אלהי הבוטח אליך
3a	Be gracious to me, O Lord,	חנני אדני
	b for to you I cry all day long.	כי אליך אקרא כל־היום
	4a Make glad the soul of your servant,	שמח נפש עבדך
	b for to you, O Lord, I lift up my soul.	כי אליך אדני נפשי אשא
II	5a For you, Lord, are good, and ready to forgive,	כִּי־אתה אדני טוב וסלח
	b and abundant in lovingkindness to all who call upon you.	ורב־חסד לכל־קראיך
	6a Give ear, O Yhwh, to my prayer,	האזינה יהוה תפילתי
	b and give heed to the voice of my supplications.	והקשיבה בקול תחנונותי
	7a In the day of my trouble, I shall call upon you,	ביום צרתי אקראך
	b for you will answer me.	כי תענני
	8a There is no one like you among the gods, O Lord,	איך־כמוך באלהים אדני
	b nor are there any works like yours.	ואין כמעשיך
	9a All nations whom you have made shall come	כל־גוים אשר עשית יבואו
	b and worship before you,	וישתחוּ לפניך
III	c O Lord, and shall glorify your name.	אדני ויכבדו לשמך
	10a For you are great and do wondrous deeds;	כִּי־גדול אתה ועשה נפלאות
	b you alone are God.	אתה אלהים לבדך
	11a Teach me your way, O Yhwh, I will walk in your truth;	הורני יהוה דרכך אהלך באמתך
	b unite my heart to fear your name.	יחד לבבי ליראה שמך
	12a I will give thanks to you, O Lord, my God, with all my heart,	אודך אדני אלהי בכל־לבבי
	b and will glorify your name forever.	ואכבדה שמך לעולם
	13a For your lovingkindness toward me is great,	כִּי־חסדך גדול עלי
	b and you have delivered my soul from the depths of Sheol.	והצלת נפשי משאול תחתיה
	14a O God, arrogant men have risen up against me,	אלהים זדים קמו־עלי
	b and a band of violent men have sought my life,	ועדת עריצים בקשו נפשי
	c and they have not set You before them.	ולא שמוך לנגדם

²⁶⁴ Regarding the English translation of the Hebrew text, I acknowledge the assistance of Bible.org, with the ESV, LSB, and NABRE being particularly helpful for my work.

²⁶⁵ According to the Hebrew text, the first two cola should in fact be 1b and 1c, since the Hebrew text has an introductory remark on the Davidic origin in v. 1a. Due to the fact that it is missing in the Syriac text and we are interested in a comparison, we will ignore the first colon.

IV	15a	But you, O Lord, are a God merciful and gracious,	ואתה אדני אל־רחום וחנן
	b	slow to anger and abundant in lovingkindness and truth.	ארך אפים ורבי־חסד ואמת
	16a	Turn to me, and be gracious to me,	פנה אלי וחנני
	b	grant your strength to your servant,	תנה־עוז לעבדך
	c	and save the son of your maidservant.	והושיעה לבן־אמתך
	17a	Show me a sign for good,	עשה־עמי לטובה
	b	that those who hate me may see it and be ashamed,	ויראו שנאי ויבשו
	c	because you, O Yhwh, have helped me and comforted me.	כי־אתה יהוה עזרתני ונחמתני

As far as textual criticism is concerned, we draw attention to the issue of **אתה אלהי** in v. 2b, which should be moved either to the beginning or end of v. 3a. This theoretically supports the colometrical construction of a further bicolon **הבוטח אליך**/ **הבוטח אליך** (8:9).²⁶⁶ Nevertheless, this amendment is not applied to the present study.

A number of arguments support the proposal of four strophes in vv. 1–4, 5–10, 11–14 and 15–17.²⁶⁷ The first strophe is shaped by the repetition of **כי** ‘for’ in cola 1b, 2a, 3b and 4b; **נפשי** ‘my soul’ in cola 2a, 4a and 4b, and **עבדך** ‘your servant’ in cola 2b and 4a.

The second strophe can be considered in vv. 5–10 due to the use of the inclusion of **אתה** in cola 5a, 10a and 10b. Furthermore, the repetition of **כי** ‘for’ in cola 5a, 7b and 10a, the root **עשה** ‘to do’ in cola 8b, 9a and 10a; **כל** ‘all’ in cola 5b and 9a, and **קרא** ‘to call’ in cola 5b and 7a highlight the strophe. Additionally, the consonants **כ** and **ק** together form a remarkable alliteration within the second strophe in cola 5a, 5b, 6b, 7a, 7b, 8a, 8b, 9a, and 10a. The frequent vocative form of words **אדני** and **אלהים** in verses highlights the strophe.

The third strophe consists of vv. 11–14 owing to the repetition of **לבבי** ‘my heart’ in cola 11b and 12a, **שמך** ‘your name’ in cola 11b and 12b; **עלי** ‘against me’ in cola 13a and 14a, and **נפשי** ‘my soul’ in cola 13b and 14b. The imperative verb **הורני** ‘turn’ at the onset of v. 11 signals a new strophe by thematic shift.

The fourth strophe can be considered in vv. 15–17 first of all because of the word **אתה** ‘you’ in cola 15a and 17c, which forms an inclusion, and secondly because of the fifteen-fold repetition of the consonants **א** and **ע**. Moreover, the word root **חנן** ‘be gracious’ occurs in cola 15a and 16a.²⁶⁸

²⁶⁶ Cf. Nömmik and Pöldsam 2018, 401.

²⁶⁷ Van der Lugt (2014, 434) delineates the psalm into vv. 1–7, 8–14, 15–17, Fokkelman (2000, 241–243) and Terrien (2003, 610–613) vv. 1–7, 8–13, 14–17; Seybold (1996) vv. 1–5, 6–10, 11–15, 16–17; Nömmik and Pöldsam (2018, 404) distinct vv. 1–4*, 5–7, 10–13*, 15–17* in the earliest layer.

²⁶⁸ Van der Lugt (2010, 435–438) identifies several key strophic markers in Ps 86 to delineate the structure of the psalm. These include imperatives and vocatives at the beginning of strophes, as well as recurring words or phrases that help mark strophic boundaries. He also notes verbal repetitions within and between strophes, such as repeated roots, pronouns, and divine names. The psalm is divided into two main cantos (vv. 1–7 and 8–14) plus a concluding coda (vv. 15–17), with each canto having a concentric structure of strophes. Key transition markers and verbal patterns help delineate the individual strophes within each canto, creating an intricate poetic

3. Word repetition and sound figures

The Syriac translator tries to render Hebrew words with accurate Syriac equivalents as he strives to present a comprehensible and understandable translation. Therefore, the word **חַסַּד** 'answer me' in vv. 1a and 7 renders **ܥܢܢܝ** 'you' in vv. 2a, 2b, 5a, 9c, 10(2x), 15a and 17c **ܐܬܬܗ**, **ܚܝܡ** 'day' in vv. 3b and 7 **ܝܘܡ**, **ܢܦܫ** 'soul' in vv. 4a, 4b, 13b and 14b **ܢܦܫܐ**, **ܚܝܠܐ** 'because' in vv. 1b, 2a, 3b, 4b, 5a, 9c (**ܚܝܠܐ**) and 13a **ܒܝ**, **ܚܝܠܐ** 'Lord' in vv. 1a, 3a, 4b, 5a, 6a, 8, 9b, 11a, 12a, 15a and 17c **ܐܕܢܝ** and **ܝܗܘܐ**, **ܬܒ** 'good' in vv. 2a, 5a, 5b, 13a, 15b and 17a **ܚܝܠܐ** and **ܬܒ**, **ܚܝܠܐ** 'save' in vv. 2b and 16b **ܝܫܥ**, **ܚܝܠܐ** 'your servant' in vv. 2b, 4a and 16b **ܥܒܕܕܝܐ**, **ܚܝܠܐ** 'God' in vv. 2b, 8, 10 and 12a **ܐܠܗܝ** and **ܐܕܢܝ**, **ܠܡܕ** 'toward' in vv. 3b, 4b and 6a **ܐܠܝܕ**, **ܚܝܠܐ** 'cry out' in vv. 3b, 5b and 7 **ܩܪܐ**, **ܚܝܠܐ** 'all' in vv. 3b, 5a, 9a and 12a **ܚܝܠܐ**, **ܚܝܠܐ** 'your name' in vv. 9c, 11b and 12b **ܫܡܝܐ**, **ܚܝܠܐ** 'do' in vv. 9a and 17a **ܥܫܐ** (cf. also v. 8 with the noun **ܚܝܠܐ** / **ܡܥܫܐ**), **ܚܝܠܐ** 'mercy' in vv. 3a, 15a and 16a **ܚܝܠܐ**, **ܚܝܠܐ** 'praise' in vv. 9c and 12b **ܚܝܠܐ**, **ܚܝܠܐ** 'great' in vv. 5b, 13a and 15b **ܚܝܠܐ** and **ܚܝܠܐ**, **ܚܝܠܐ** 'truth' in vv. 11a and 15b **ܚܝܠܐ**, **ܚܝܠܐ** 'my heart' in vv. 11b and 12a **ܚܝܠܐ**.

It is noticeable that the Syriac text shows a greater tendency towards word repetition, as indicated by some cases where the Syriac text joins different Hebrew words into one equivalent. It should be mentioned that word repetition particularly dominates the first and fourth strophes. Besides, the word **ܚܝܠܐ** has been repeated more than other elements within the psalm.

The fact that the psalm does not employ **ܚܝܠܐ** as frequently as **ܒܝ** is actually a significant observation. Within the Hebrew version, the presence of **ܒܝ** is far more prominent and excessive, while the translator of the Syriac version aimed to minimise the dominance of the Hebrew conjunction **ܒܝ**, which is associated with the unconstrained and free style of translation.

The Syriac translator sometimes replaces various Hebrew words with one and the same word, but this does not indicate that the Syriac text lacks the choice of words.²⁶⁹

structure centred around themes of prayer, praise, and trust in God's deliverance. Fokkelman (2000, 241–243) uses linguistic and structural elements as markers: repeated words, nominal predicates, imperatives, confessional statements, thematic shifts, inclusion, parallelism, keyword repetition, pronoun distribution, divine names, and sound patterns. He also organises Ps 86 in an ABB'A' model. Terrien's methodology (2003, 613) for delineating strophes in Biblical poetry employs a dual approach: 1) he identifies thematic shifts as primary strophic boundary indicators, and 2) he analyses the recurrence of specific words and expressions as structural markers.

²⁶⁹ Carbajosa (2008, 382) believes that the semantic simplification in P-Ps is seen, and a single term is used to render multiple Hebrew words; however, this should not necessarily be taken as an indication of a poorer Syriac vocabulary for Hebrew. In fact, the different terms that P-Ps brings to translate one Hebrew word, in contrast, show both the richness and specificity of its lexicon. One of the ways P-Ps shows its robust linguistic adaptability and depth is by stretching the meaning of Hebrew words to suit only that particular context. Van Peursen (2016, 63) is of the opinion that from a translation technical standpoint, this phenomenon can be characterised as a tendency to standardise vocabulary across a broader passage. From a literary angle, it can be understood as a stylistic tool employed to enhance the cohesion of a textual segment.

For instance, **יְהוָה** ‘Lord’ translates both **אֲדֹנִי** and **יְהוָה**, **טוֹב** ‘good’ renders **חֲסִיד** and **גְּדוֹל** רב ‘great’, **אֱלֹהִים** ‘God’ and **אֲדֹנִי**.

The following table represents the repetition frequency of the Hebrew and Syriac words.

Hebrew text	Syriac text
עֲנִי (1a, 7b)	ܚܪ (1a, 7)
יְהוָה (1a, 6a, 11a, 17c)	ܝܗܘܐ (1a, 3a, 4b, 5a, 6a, 8, 9b, 11a, 12a, 15a, 17c)
כִּי (1b, 2a, 3b, 4b, 5a, 7b, 10a, 13a, 17c)	ܚܝܐ (1b, 2a, 3b, 4b, 5a, 9c, 13a)
אֲנִי (1b, 2a)	
אֶתָּה (2b, 5a, 10a, 10b, 15a, 17c)	ܐܬܬܐ (2a, 2b, 5a 2x, 9c, 10 2x, 15a, 17c)
טוֹב (5a, 17a)	ܬܒ (2a, 5a, 17a)
נֶפֶשׁ (2a, 4a, 4b, 13b, 14b)	ܢܦܫ (2a, 4a, 4b, 13b, 14b)
יֵשַׁע (2b, 16b)	ܝܫܥܡ (2b, 16b)
עֲבָדְךָ (2b, 4a, 16b)	ܥܒܕܐ as verb and noun (2b, 4a, 8, 9a, 10, 16b, 17a)
אֱלֹהִים (2b, 8a, 10b, 12a, 14a)	ܐܠܡ (2b, 8, 10, 12a, 14a, 15a)
אֲדֹנִי (3a, 4b, 5a, 8a, 9c, 12a, 15a)	ܐܠܡ and ܝܗܘܐ see
חֲנָן (3a, 15a, 16a)	ܚܢܢ (3a, 15a, 16a)
יוֹם (3b, 7a)	ܝܡܐ (3b, 7)
אֵלֶיךָ (2b, 3b, 4a)	ܐܠܝܗ (3b, 4b)
קִרָּא (3b, 5b, 7a)	ܩܪܐ (3b, 5b, 7)
כָּל (3b, 5a, 9a, 12a)	ܟܠ (3b, 5b, 9a, 12a)
רַב (5b, 15b)	ܪܒܐ (5b, 13a, 15b)
חֲסִיד (2a, 5b, 13a, 15b)	ܚܚܝܕܐ (5b, 13a, 15b)
מעֲשִׂיךָ as verb and in (8b, 9a, 10a, 17a)	ܚܒܐ see
אֵין (8a, 8b)	ܐܝܢ (8 2x)
שָׁמַךְ (9c, 11b, 12b)	ܫܡܚܬ (9c, 11b, 12b)
כָּבֵד (9c, 12b)	ܫܒܚܐ (9c, 12b)
אִמָּת (11a, 15b)	ܡܫܥܡܐ (11a, 15b)
לֵבָב (11b, 12a)	ܠܒܐ (11b, 12a)
145 words and 83 repetitions of 24 words	149 words and 83 repetitions of 21 words

The function of lexical repetition as a strophic marker is preserved in both the Hebrew and Syriac versions of the psalm. While these repetitive patterns are distributed throughout the text, they exhibit particularly high density in the first and fourth strophes. Comparative analysis reveals an intriguing phenomenon: the frequency of repetition instances is identical in both versions, yet the Syriac text demonstrates a slightly higher intensity of word repetition, indicating a more concentrated use of this literary device.

The psalm’s structure is characterised by a notable symmetry, with repetitive elements creating cohesion between its initial and concluding sections. This structural feature appears to have been a focal point for the translator, who seems to have made a concerted effort to maintain the repetition patterns of the source text. Such

fidelity to the original's repetitive structure suggests a deliberate attempt to preserve not only the semantic content but also the poetic and structural integrity of the Hebrew psalm in the Syriac rendition.

As regards sound figures and especially alliteration, *ʿ* and *ʔ* often occur due to the popularity of the personal pronouns *ʿ* (1b) and *ʔ* (2a, 2b, 5a 2x) intertwined with a number of other words, in vv. 1a (*ܥܠܝܢܝܐ, ܥܠܝܢܝܐ*), 2b (*ܥܠܝܢܝܐ, ܥܠܝܢܝܐ*), 3a (*ܥܠܝܢܝܐ*), 3b (*ܥܠܝܢܝܐ*), 4a (*ܥܠܝܢܝܐ*), 4b (*ܥܠܝܢܝܐ*).²⁷⁰ Similarly, *ܥ* prevails because of the predominance of the words *ܥܠܝܢܝܐ* (1a, 3a, 4b, 5a, 6a) and *ܥܠܝܢܝܐ* (1b, 2a, 3b, 4b, 5a) complemented by *ܥܠܝܢܝܐ* in v. 1b and *ܥܠܝܢܝܐ* in v. 2b; furthermore, *b* and *h* add more colour to the alliteration of the first strophe in cola 1b (*ܥܠܝܢܝܐ*), 2b (*ܥܠܝܢܝܐ*), 3b (*ܥܠܝܢܝܐ*) and 6b (*ܥܠܝܢܝܐ*). The respective Hebrew strophe in vv. 1–4 (considering also vv. 5–6) represents mainly *ʿ*- and *ʔ*-alliteration.

The consonants *ʿ* and *ʔ* are repeated twenty-two times within the third strophe of the Syriac text in vv. 7–12. This striking phenomenon is not the case in the second strophe of the Hebrew text in vv. 5–10. The voluminous alliteration occurs in cola 7a (*ܥܠܝܢܝܐ, ܥܠܝܢܝܐ*), 8 (*ܥܠܝܢܝܐ, ܥܠܝܢܝܐ, ܥܠܝܢܝܐ, ܥܠܝܢܝܐ*), 9a (*ܥܠܝܢܝܐ, ܥܠܝܢܝܐ*), 9b (*ܥܠܝܢܝܐ*), 9c (*ܥܠܝܢܝܐ*), 10 (*ܥܠܝܢܝܐ, ܥܠܝܢܝܐ, ܥܠܝܢܝܐ, ܥܠܝܢܝܐ*), 11a (*ܥܠܝܢܝܐ, ܥܠܝܢܝܐ*), 11b (*ܥܠܝܢܝܐ*), 12a (*ܥܠܝܢܝܐ, ܥܠܝܢܝܐ*) and 12b (*ܥܠܝܢܝܐ, ܥܠܝܢܝܐ*).

The fivefold *ʿ*-alliteration in cola 13a (*ܥܠܝܢܝܐ*), 13b (*ܥܠܝܢܝܐ*) and 15a (*ܥܠܝܢܝܐ, ܥܠܝܢܝܐ, ܥܠܝܢܝܐ, ܥܠܝܢܝܐ, ܥܠܝܢܝܐ*) highlights the third strophe. It should be noticed that colon 15a provides a complex poetic structure with the help of consonants *ʿ* and *ʔ* (*ܥܠܝܢܝܐ ܥܠܝܢܝܐ ܥܠܝܢܝܐ ܥܠܝܢܝܐ ܥܠܝܢܝܐ*). Furthermore, the ninefold repetition of *ʿ* and *ʔ* in cola 13a (*ܥܠܝܢܝܐ*), 14a (*ܥܠܝܢܝܐ, ܥܠܝܢܝܐ, ܥܠܝܢܝܐ*), 14b (*ܥܠܝܢܝܐ, ܥܠܝܢܝܐ*), 14c (*ܥܠܝܢܝܐ, ܥܠܝܢܝܐ*) and 15a (*ܥܠܝܢܝܐ, ܥܠܝܢܝܐ*) emphasises the third strophe. Comparing the results with the Hebrew text, also the alliteration of *ʿ* and *ʔ* in the third strophe deserves mentioning.

In the fourth strophe, the tenfold repetition of *ʿ* and *ʔ* in cola 16a (*ܥܠܝܢܝܐ, ܥܠܝܢܝܐ, ܥܠܝܢܝܐ, ܥܠܝܢܝܐ, ܥܠܝܢܝܐ, ܥܠܝܢܝܐ, ܥܠܝܢܝܐ, ܥܠܝܢܝܐ, ܥܠܝܢܝܐ, ܥܠܝܢܝܐ*), 16b (*ܥܠܝܢܝܐ, ܥܠܝܢܝܐ*), 17a (*ܥܠܝܢܝܐ, ܥܠܝܢܝܐ, ܥܠܝܢܝܐ*) and 17c (*ܥܠܝܢܝܐ, ܥܠܝܢܝܐ*) indicate alliteration. Similar observations can be made about the Hebrew text.

The comparative analysis of the Hebrew and Syriac psalm versions reveals that both texts employ word repetition and alliteration as significant structural devices. These phonetic and lexical phenomena play a crucial role in delineating the strophic organisation of the psalm in both languages.

Notably, the Syriac rendition exhibits a comparatively higher frequency of alliteration than its Hebrew counterpart, with one exception: the alliteration of the *'alef*, which occurs with similar prevalence in both versions. The analysis indicates that the eminent sounds in the first strophe are *ʿ*, *ʔ* and *ܥ*; and the second, third and fourth strophes are mainly dominated by *ʿ* and *ʔ*.

²⁷⁰ Please refer to the introductory chapter where the phonological considerations surrounding the alliterative use of *ʿ* and *ʔ* in Syriac texts were discussed.

4. Parallelism and syntax in the Syriac psalm

An examination of parallelism in the Hebrew and Syriac psalm versions reveals both consistencies and divergences in their structural composition. Synonymous parallelism is consistently preserved in both versions for vv. 2, 11, 12, 13, 15 and 16. This structural congruence suggests a deliberate effort by the Syriac translator to maintain the poetic architecture of these specific verses.

A notable ambiguity arises in the treatment of vv. 8 and 10. While these verses appear as monocola in the Syriac rendition, they could potentially be interpreted as bicola, mirroring the Hebrew text's structure. Such an interpretation would extend the instances of synonymous parallelism, further aligning the Syriac version with its Hebrew counterpart.

Generally, the Syriac translation adheres closely to the Hebrew word order, demonstrating a commitment to preserving the original text's syntactic structure. However, deviations from this pattern are observed in three primary instances, such as omission of certain elements, addition of new elements and alteration of syntactic structure.

These modifications appear to be motivated by a desire to enhance comprehensibility for the Syriac readership, suggesting a translation strategy that balances fidelity to the source text with accessibility for the target audience.

A salient example of this adaptive approach is evident in the treatment of colon 5a. The Hebrew text reads **כִּי־אַתָּה אֲדֹנָי טוֹב וְסֹלֶחַ** 'For you, Lord, are good, and ready to forgive', whereas the Syriac version renders it as **ܟܝܝܬܗܘܢܐ ܕܐܕܢܝ ܬܘܒ ܘܫܠܚ** 'For you, O Lord, you are good'. The omission of **וְסֹלֶחַ** 'ready to forgive' in the Syriac translation represents a significant departure from the source text, potentially altering the semantic nuance of the verse. In response to a lexical omission in the source text, the translator has ingeniously utilised a double occurrence of the pronoun **ܬܘܒ** in Syriac. This linguistic manoeuvre serves as a compensatory mechanism, effectively balancing the textual structure despite the absence of a corresponding word in the original.

5. Quantitative poetic analysis

The following table provides quantitative results of the metre in the Syriac psalm according to the Leiden edition.

Strophes	Verses	Words	Words in verses	Syllables	Syllables in verses	Colometry	Transliteration	
I	1a	4	8	7	15	17	<i>Šli/mār/yā/’ed/nāḵ/ wa/’nin</i>	ܥ ܠܐ ܡܢ ܡܪܝܢ ܡܥܬܝܢ.
	b	4		8	17		<i>meṭ/ṭul/dmes/kē/nā/nā/wḥāy/šā</i>	ܡܬܬܠܡܥܬܝܢ ܡܢ ܡܥܬܝܢ.
	2a	5	11	7	18	17	<i>Naṭ/ṭar/lnaṣṣ/ meṭ/ṭul/dṭāḥ/ at</i>	ܢܬܬܪܠܢܥܨܥ ܡܬܬܠܡܥܬܝܢ ܐܬ.
	b	6		11	23		<i>proq/l’ aḥ/dāḵ/at/a/lā/hā/ḡam/sab/b</i>	ܦܪܩܠܐܡܬܝܢ ܡܢ ܡܬܬܠܡܥܬܝܢ ܐܬ.
							<i>ar/ bāḵ</i>	
	3a	3	7	5	14	10	<i>Raḥ/hem/’lay/ mār/yā</i>	ܪܥܬܝܢ ܡܪܝܢ.
	b	4		9	18		<i>meṭ/ṭul/dal/wā/ṭāḵ/eq/rē/bḵol/yom</i>	ܡܬܬܠܡܥܬܝܢ ܡܢ ܡܬܬܠܡܥܬܝܢ.
	4a	3	8	6	17	12	<i>Ḥad/dā/naṣṣ/šēh/ d’ aḥ/dāḵ</i>	ܡܢ ܡܬܬܠܡܥܬܝܢ ܐܬ.
	b	5		11	21		<i>meṭ/ṭul/dal/wā/ṭāḵ/mār/yā/’a/ri/meṭ/ naṣṣ</i>	ܡܬܬܠܡܥܬܝܢ ܡܢ ܡܬܬܠܡܥܬܝܢ.
	5a	5	10	7	17	16	<i>Meṭ/ṭul /dat/mār/yā/ ṭāḥ/ at</i>	ܡܬܬܠܡܥܬܝܢ ܡܢ ܡܬܬܠܡܥܬܝܢ.
	b	5		10	24		<i>wsag/gi/yā/ṭay/bu/ṭāḵ/lḵol/dqā/rēn/ lāḵ</i>	ܡܬܬܠܡܥܬܝܢ ܡܢ ܡܬܬܠܡܥܬܝܢ.
	6a	3	6	4	10	12	<i>Šuṭ/mār/yā/’sloṭ</i>	ܫܘܬܝܢ ܡܪܝܢ.
	b	3		6	12		<i>waš/ma/’bqā/lā/ḡay/’āṭ</i>	ܡܬܬܠܡܥܬܝܢ ܡܢ ܡܬܬܠܡܥܬܝܢ.
II	7	4	4	9	9	24	<i>Byaw/mā/ḡul/šān/qrē/ṭāḵ/wa/’nay/tān</i>	ܒܝܐܡܬܝܢ ܡܢ ܡܬܬܠܡܥܬܝܢ.
	8	7	7	13	13	28	<i>Layṭ/aḵ/wā/ṭāḵ/mār/yā/a/lā/haṇ/wl</i>	ܠܝܬܝܢ ܡܢ ܡܬܬܠܡܥܬܝܢ.
							<i>ayṭ/aḵ/’ḥā/ḡayḵ</i>	ܐܝܬܝܢ.
	9a	3	12	6	22	14	<i>Kol/hon/’am/mē/ḡa/’ḥadt</i>	ܟܠܝܢ ܡܢ ܡܬܬܠܡܥܬܝܢ.
	b	4		7	18		<i>nē/ton/wnesg/ḡun/lāḵ/ mār/yā</i>	ܢܝܬܝܢ ܡܢ ܡܬܬܠܡܥܬܝܢ.
	c	5		9	21		<i>wan/šab/ḡun/laš/māḵ/meṭ/ṭul/draḥ/at</i>	ܡܬܬܠܡܥܬܝܢ ܡܢ ܡܬܬܠܡܥܬܝܢ.
	10	6	6	13	13	26	<i>’ā/ḥed/at/teḡm/rā/ṭā/at/a/lā/hā/ḡal/</i>	ܐܬܝܬܝܢ ܡܢ ܡܬܬܠܡܥܬܝܢ.
							<i>ḡo/ḡayḵ</i>	ܡܬܬܠܡܥܬܝܢ.
	11a	5	10	11	20	24	<i>Ḥaw/wān/mār/yā/ur/ḡāḵ/we/haḡ/leḵ</i>	ܡܬܬܠܡܥܬܝܢ ܡܢ ܡܬܬܠܡܥܬܝܢ.
							<i>/bquš/tā</i>	
	b	5		9	23		<i>neḥ/dē/leb/bay/lēn/dḡāḥ/lin/laš/māḵ</i>	ܢܝܬܝܢ ܡܢ ܡܬܬܠܡܥܬܝܢ.
12a	7	10	11	17	22		<i>Aw/dē/lāḵ/mār/yā/a/lāḥ/men/kol/</i>	ܐܬܝܬܝܢ ܡܢ ܡܬܬܠܡܥܬܝܢ.
							<i>lēh/ leb</i>	
	b	3		6	12		<i>weš/šab/baḡ/šmāḵ/l’ ā/lam</i>	ܡܬܬܠܡܥܬܝܢ ܡܢ ܡܬܬܠܡܥܬܝܢ.

III 13a	4	9	8	16	17	<i>Meṭ/ṭul /dṭay/bu/ṭ āk/ sey/yaṭ / 'lay</i>	ܡܝܬܬܘܠ ܕܬܝܒܘܬܐ ܝܫܝܐ ܝܝܬܐ
b	5		8		21	<i>wfaṣ/ṣit/naṣ/men/ṣyol/taḥ/tāy/tā</i>	ܡܝܬܬܘܠ ܕܬܝܒܘܬܐ ܝܫܝܐ ܝܝܬܐ
14a	4	10	8	21	14	<i>A/lā/hā/'a/wā/lē/qām/'lay</i>	ܐܠܐܠܐ ܠܐܠܐ ܠܐܠܐ ܠܐܠܐ
b	4		9		23	<i>wak/nuṣ/tā/d 'a/ṣi/nē/b 'a 'uh/lnaṣ</i>	ܡܝܬܬܘܠ ܕܬܝܒܘܬܐ ܝܫܝܐ ܝܝܬܐ
c	2		4		10	<i>wlā/ et/dak/ruḵ</i>	ܡܝܬܬܘܠ ܕܬܝܒܘܬܐ ܝܫܝܐ ܝܝܬܐ
15a	5	10	13	24	25	<i>Wat/mār/yā/a/lā/hā/mraḥ/mā/nā/</i> <i>wam/raḥ/fā/nā</i>	ܡܝܬܬܘܠ ܕܬܝܒܘܬܐ ܝܫܝܐ ܝܝܬܐ
b	5		11		24	<i>nag/gir/ru/hā/wsag/gi/ṭay/bu/ṭā/</i> <i>wquṣ/tā</i>	ܡܝܬܬܘܠ ܕܬܝܒܘܬܐ ܝܫܝܐ ܝܝܬܐ
IV 16a	4	10	6	16	14	<i>Eṭ/pan/'lay/wraḥ/hem/ 'lay</i>	ܡܝܬܬܘܠ ܕܬܝܒܘܬܐ ܝܫܝܐ ܝܝܬܐ
b	6		10		23	<i>hab/hay/lā/l 'ab/dāk/waf/roq/lḥar/</i> <i>'am/ṭāk</i>	ܡܝܬܬܘܠ ܕܬܝܒܘܬܐ ܝܫܝܐ ܝܝܬܐ
17a	4	11	6	21	13	<i>'beḏ/'am/ 'ā/ṭā/ṭāb/ṭā</i>	ܡܝܬܬܘܠ ܕܬܝܒܘܬܐ ܝܫܝܐ ܝܝܬܐ
b	3		6		17	<i>dneḥ/zon/sā/nay/ wneḥ/tun</i>	ܡܝܬܬܘܠ ܕܬܝܒܘܬܐ ܝܫܝܐ ܝܝܬܐ
c	4		9		21	<i>dat/mār/yā/'ad/dar/tān/wḥay/ya/tān</i>	ܡܝܬܬܘܠ ܕܬܝܒܘܬܐ ܝܫܝܐ ܝܝܬܐ

The versification analysis of Ps 86 in the Syriac text of the Leiden edition reveals a complex structural composition. The psalm comprises eleven bicola, three monocola, and three tricola, distributed across four strophes. This arrangement demonstrates a notable variability in both syllabic and lexical quantities throughout the text.

The strophic structure and composition of the psalm exhibit intricate patterns. The first strophe in vv. 1–6 consists of six bicola with a syllabic arrangement of 15, 18, 14, 17, 17 and 10, and a word count of 8, 11, 7, 8, 10 and 6, respectively. The second strophe, spanning vv. 7–12, presents a more varied structure. It includes two bicola in vv. 11–12 with syllabic arrangements of 20:10 and 17:10, three monocola in vv. 7–8 and 10 with syllabic arrangements of 9, 13 and 13 and word counts of 4, 7 and 6, and a tricolon in v. 9 comprising 22 syllables and 12 words. The third strophe, covering vv. 13–15, contains two bicola in vv. 13 and 15 with syllabic arrangements of 16:24 and 9:10, respectively, and a tricolon in v. 14 with 21 syllables and 10 words. The fourth and final strophe in vv. 16–17 is composed of a bicolon in v. 16 with 16 syllables and 10 words, and a tricolon in v. 17 with 21 syllables and 11 words. This structural analysis indicates that Ps 86 comprises asymmetrical strophes, exhibiting significant variations in syllabic and lexical quantities across different verses and strophic units.

Despite the apparent asymmetry, the psalm displays intriguing patterns of quantitative balance in verses. A notable balance is observed in vv. 1, 2, 5, 6, 9, 11, 13 and 17. Furthermore, if vv. 7 and 8 are considered a bicolon, a pattern emerges where the word count predominantly ranges between 8 and 11 across strophes, with vv. 3, 6 and 10 being exceptions to this pattern.

The colometrical analysis reveals that while overall strophic lengths are uneven, specific verses demonstrate balanced structures. Verses 1, 6, 11 and 15 exhibit particularly noteworthy consonantal balance, with ratios of 17:17, 12:12, 24:23, and 25:24, respectively.

Based on the number of syllables, words and consonants in each strophe, the following results are tabulated:

Strophes	Verses	Syllables	Words	Colometry
I	1–6	91	50	199
II	7–12	94	49	211
III	13–15	61	29	134
IV	16–17	37	21	88

An analysis of the strophic structure in Ps 86 reveals significant heterogeneity among the strophes, with a notable exception in the relationship between the first and second strophes. This unique correlation is evidenced by their remarkably similar compositional metrics: the first strophe contains 91 syllables and 49 words, while the second strophe comprises 94 syllables and 49 words.

The psalm exhibits a considerable range of metrical elements. Syllabic counts per colon fluctuate between 4 and 13, while word counts vary from 2 to 7. In its entirety, the Syriac version of Ps 86 encompasses 283 syllables distributed across 34 cola, yielding an average of 8.32 syllables per colon.

A salient feature of this psalm's composition is the absence of a consistent syllabic or colometrical pattern across the psalm. This lack of uniformity is manifested in the varying number of cola per strophe and the heterosyllabic metrical structure observed throughout the text. Psalm 86 is composed of strophes with different numbers of cola.

The structural composition of this text exhibits a notable heterogeneity in syllabic arrangement, a characteristic that aligns with the patterns observed in antecedent psalmic literature. Despite this apparent diversity, the text manifests both the Qinah and inverted Qinah verses, structural elements intrinsic to Hebrew poetic tradition. A salient feature of the Qinah verse is the deliberate asymmetrical distribution of syllables between cola, with the initial colon having more syllables than the second (in the case of inverted Qinah, the relation is vice-versa).

This characteristic indicates a poetic approach prioritising semantic and rhetorical considerations over adherence to a rigid syllabic structure. The translator compensates for the metrics and even strengthens the repetitive patterns of already intensive repetition in the Hebrew psalm.

Now, we will take a look at the Hebrew text. A table illustrates the number of syllables and words in each colon and verse. The colometrical results are also presented.

Strophes	Verses	Words	Words in verses	Syllables	Syllables in verses	Colometry		
I ²⁷¹	1a	4	8	10	18	15	הט/טה/יה/וה/ אז/נ/ך/ ע/נ/ני	הטה־יהוה אונך ענני
	b	4		8		14	כי/ע/ני/ ו/אב/יון/ א/ני	כיעני ואביון אני
	2a	5	11	10	26	17	ש/מ/רה/נפ/שי/כי/ח/סיד/ א/ני	שמרה נפשי כיחסידי אני
	b	6		16		24	הו/שע/ עב/ד/ך/את/תה/ א/ל/הי/	הושע עבדך אתה אלהי
							הב/בו/טח/ א/לי/ך/	הבוטח אליך
	3a	2	7	6	15	8	חנ/נ/ני/ א/ד/ני	חנני אדני
	b	5		9		16	כי/ א/לי/ך/ אק/רא/ כל/היום	כי אליך אקרא כל־היום
	4a	3	8	7	18	10	ש/מ/מח/ נ/פש/ עב/ד/ך/	שמח נפש עבדך
	b	5		11		17	כי/א/לי/ך/א/ד/ני/נפ/שי/ אש/שא	כי אליך אדני נפשי אשא
II	5a	5	9	9	19	16	כי/את/תה/א/ד/ני/טוב/ וסל/לח	כי־אתה אדני טוב וסלח
	b	4		10		14	ו/רב/ח/סד/ ל/כל/ק/ר/אי/ך/	ורב־חסד לכל־קראיך
	6a	3	6	10	21	15	ה/א/ז/נה/ יה/וה/ ת/פל/ל/תי	האזינה יהוה תפלתי
	b	3		11		19	ו/הק/שי/בה/ב/קול/ ת/ח/נו/נו/תי	והקשיבה בקול תחנונותי
	7a	3	5	9	14	13	ב/יום/ צ/ר/תי/ אק/ר/אד/ך/	ביום צרתי אקראך
	b	2		5		7	כי/ ת/ע/נ/ני	כי תענני
	8a	4	6	11	18	17	אי/ן/ב/מו/ך/ ב/א/ל/הים/ א/ד/ני	אי־כמוך באלהים אדני
	b	2		7		10	ו/אי/ך/ כ/מ/ע/שי/ך/	ואין כמעשיך
	9a	5	10	11	31	18	כל/גו/ים/ א/שר/ ע/שי/ת/ י/בו/או	כל־גוים אשר עשית יבואו
	b	2		9		12	ו/יש/ת/ח/ו/ו/ ל/פ/ני/ך/	וישתחוּ לפניך
	c	3		11		14	א/ד/ני/ וי/כב/ב/דו/ ל/ש/מ/ך/	אדני ויכבדו לשמך
	10a	5	8	11	19	19	כי/ג/דול/ את/תה/ ו/ע/שה/ נפ/ל/אות	כי־גדול אתה ועשה נפלאות
	b	3		8		12	את/תה/ א/ל/הים/ לבד/ך/ך/	אתה אלהים לבדך
III	11a	5	9	16	27	22	הו/ר/ני/ יה/וה/ דר/ב/ך/ א/הל/ל/ך/	הורני יהוה דרכך אהלך
							ב/א/מת/ת/ך/	באמתך
	b	4		11		15	י/חד/ ל/ב/בי/ ל/יר/אה/ ש/מ/ך/	יחד לבבי ליראה שמך
	12a	5	8	14	24	19	או/ד/ך/ א/ד/ני/ א/ל/הי/ ב/כל/ל/ב/בי	אודך אדני אלהי בכל־לבבי
	b	3		10		14	ו/א/כב/ב/דה/ ש/מ/ך/ ל/עו/לם	ואכבדה שמך לעולם
	13a	4	8	8	20	13	כי/חס/ד/ך/ ג/דול/ ע/לי	כי־חסדך גדול עלי
	b	4		12		19	ו/הצ/צל/ת/ נפ/שי/ מש/ש/אול/ תח/תי/יה	והצלת נפשי משאול תחתיה
	14a	4	11	9	27	15	א/ל/הים/ ז/דים/ ק/מו/ע/לי	אלהים זדים קמו־עלי
	b	4		10		18	ו/ע/דת/ ע/רי/צים/ בק/שו/ נפ/שי	ועדת עריצים בקשו נפשי
	c	3		8		12	ו/לא/ ש/מו/ך/ ל/נג/דם	ולא שמוך לנגדם

²⁷¹ See note 264 above.

IV	15a	5	10	12	24	19	ו/את/תה/א/ד/ני/אל/ר/חוס/ו/חנ/נן	ואתה אדני אל־רחום וחנן
	b	5		12		17	א/ר/ך/אפ/פ/ים/ו/רב/ח/סד/ו/א/מת	ארך אפים ורב־חסד ואמת
	16a	3	9	8	27	11	פ/נה/א/לי/ו/חנ/נ/ני	פנה אלי וחנני
	b	3		9		11	ת/נה/עו/ז/ך/ל/עב/ד/ך	תנה־עוז לעבדך
	c	3		10		14	ו/הו/שי/עה/ל/בן/א/מ/ת/ך	והושיעה לבן־אמתך
	17a	4	12	8	32	14	ע/שה/עמ/מי/אות/ל/טו/בה	עשה־עמי אות לטובה
	b	3		10		14	ו/יר/או/ש/נ/אי/ו/י/ב/שו	ויראו שנאי ויבשו
	c	5		14		23	כי/את/תה/יה/וה/ע/זר/ת/ני/ו/ג/חמ/ת/ני	כִּי־אתה יהוה עזרתני ונחמתני

A comparative colometrical analysis of Ps 86 in its Hebrew and Syriac versions reveals intriguing structural patterns and divergences. While exhibiting some instances of colometrical balance, the Hebrew text does not demonstrate consistent balance throughout. Specifically, vv. 1, 5, 15 and 16 show balanced colometrical ratios, but this pattern is not maintained across the entire psalm. Notably, the Hebrew version does not display significantly greater colometrical balance than its Syriac counterpart.

An intriguing metrical phenomenon has been observed in select Hebrew verses of the text under examination, specifically the presence of an inverted Qinah metre in vv. 3, 4, 6 and 13, as well as Qinah-like metrical patterns in other instances.²⁷² Notably, these metrical structures appear to be approximately mirrored in the corresponding Syriac translation. The Qinah metre, a distinctive feature of Hebrew poetic composition, raises a significant question regarding the Syriac translator's approach: whether preserving this metrical pattern in the target language was a deliberate choice or an inadvertent outcome of the translation process.

Examination of the Hebrew text's strophic composition yields varying quantitative data across the four strophes. The first strophe contains 34 words and 77 syllables, the second 44 words and 103 syllables, the third 36 words and 98 syllables, and the fourth 31 words and 83 syllables. This distribution indicates a lack of consistent balance in syllable and word counts across strophes, with the exception of a balance in word count between the first and third strophes. The Hebrew text exhibits a range of 5–16 syllables and 2–6 words per colon. In total, the Hebrew version contains 380 syllables distributed across 38 cola, resulting in an average of 10 syllables per colon.

Consonantal analysis of the Hebrew text reveals further insights into its structure. The first strophe contains 121 consonants, the second 186, the third 147, and the fourth 123. This distribution highlights a notable balance between the first and fourth strophes in terms of consonantal count, a feature not observed in the Syriac version. The fourth strophe of the Hebrew text merits particular attention, as it demonstrates a more balanced colometrical ratio compared to other strophes, with consonantal distributions of 19:17, 11:11:14 and 14:14:23, and syllabic patterns of 12:12, 8:9:10 and 8:10:14. This relative equilibrium in the fourth strophe stands out against the overall lack of correlation between verses and strophes in the psalm's structure.

²⁷² Nömmik and Pöldsam 2018, 415–416.

In comparing the Hebrew and Syriac versions, several key observations emerge. The Syriac text demonstrates greater balance in syllabic count, with a clear tendency towards lower average syllable counts per colon. This characteristic might suggest potential differences in poetic conventions or linguistic constraints between Hebrew and Syriac versification. The structural analysis of both versions reveals a complex interplay of balance and asymmetry. While isolated instances of balance are observed, neither text adheres to a consistently balanced colometrical or syllabic ratio throughout.

6. Conclusion

The Syriac translator of Ps 86 employs several linguistic and stylistic devices to delineate the psalm into four distinct strophes. Word repetition is a key strategy throughout the psalm, with specific terms recurring within each strophe. This repetition not only emphasises essential concepts but also creates cohesion within individual strophes.

Syntactical patterns play a significant role in marking strophes. The translator uses similar syntactical structures within strophes, particularly at the beginning and end of a section, creating inclusios that frame the strophic units. This technique is especially evident in the first and fourth strophes.

Grammatical features are also employed as strophic markers. The use of specific verb forms, such as imperatives, is concentrated in certain strophes, particularly the first and fourth. This grammatical consistency helps to unify the content within each strophe and distinguish it from others.

Alliteration and phonetic patterns serve as subtle markers of strophic divisions. The translator uses the repetition of certain consonants (ܐ, ܬ, and ܕ), especially at the beginning of words, to create auditory cohesion within strophes.

Thematic shifts are utilised to signal the transition between strophes. Each strophe tends to focus on a distinct topic or aspect of the psalmist's message, with transitional phrases or words sometimes employed to bridge between strophes.

The use of vocatives and pronominal suffixes varies between strophes, contributing to their distinct character. Certain strophes feature a higher concentration of vocative expressions or personal pronouns, helping to delineate them from adjacent sections.

Lastly, the translator employs transitional markers, such as conjunctions or adverbs, to signal the beginning of new strophes or to provide logical connections between strophic units.

The comparative analysis of Ps 86 in Syriac and Hebrew reveals both similarities and notable differences in poetic structure and translation techniques. While the overall structure remains largely consistent, there are subtle divergences in versification and poetic elements. The Syriac translator demonstrates a nuanced understanding of Hebrew poetic techniques, including word repetition, alliteration, and synonymous parallelism, yet applies these elements with slight variations.

Word repetition is prevalent in both versions, with the Syriac text exhibiting a higher frequency and intensity of repetitive forms. Alliteration is notably more pronounced in the Syriac rendition, suggesting a deliberate emphasis on phonetic elements. The translator's approach involves strategic additions, omissions, and modifications of syntactic elements, presumably to enhance clarity and comprehensibility for the target audience.

Metrically, both versions exhibit heterosyllabic patterns, though with distinct characteristics. The Syriac text shows evidence of a more balanced syllable count, yet this equilibrium does not consistently translate to colometrical balance throughout the psalm. Conversely, the Hebrew text demonstrates a more consistent syllabic ratio than its colometry, potentially indicating a syllabic pattern as the ideal metrical structure in this context. Interestingly, regardless of intent, the inverted Qinah metre patterns seem to be roughly reflected in the corresponding Syriac translation.

Word count analysis reveals a tendency towards balance in the Syriac version, with most verses containing 8–11 words and a significant number clustering around 10–11 words. This distribution suggests a conscious effort by the translator to maintain a degree of structural consistency.

Although the discovery indicates that the metrical patterns and strophic structures are not entirely compatible with those found in classical Syriac poetry, they share features such as word repetition, thematic coherence, parallelism, and occasional rhythmic and isosyllabic patterns. These similarities suggest a likely connection between the structure of P-Ps and characteristics found in classical Syriac poetry.

Syllabically, the Syriac version averages 8.32 syllables per colon. In comparison, the Hebrew text has an average of 10 syllables per colon. It is noteworthy that Ps 86 has the most extended syllable ratio among the psalms examined.

The Syriac text exhibits a strophic structure characterised by variable cola counts and heterosyllabic patterns, aligning with preceding psalmic traditions. Notably, it incorporates both Qinah and inverted Qinah patterns, elements typically associated with Hebrew poetry. A distinctive feature is the asymmetrical syllabic distribution within cola pairs, where the initial colon is consistently shorter than its subsequent.

CHAPTER SIX: PSALM 96

1. General information

Psalms 93–100, is located within a shared thematic and generic framework.²⁷³ According to Jennings and Lowe, a range of factors, such as the jubilant tone, the grandiose expectations, the recurrent substance and manner of the prophecies of Isaiah, and the rhythmical character of the piece, all converge to align Ps 96 with the exilic period.²⁷⁴ Terrien suggests that Ps 96 has some similarities with Deutero-Isaiah, but for him, this indicates the second temple date rather than the late exile and hopes of restoration.²⁷⁵

In earlier research, the Festival of Tabernacles and the proclamation of Yahweh as king were often proposed as the original function of the psalm.²⁷⁶ Briggs' assert that the author of 1 Chronicles 16:23–33 has incorporated the content of Ps 96 into the composition describing David's removal of the ark to Zion, as it was sung in the temple. There is, therefore, a possibility that the psalm may have been used in the temple liturgy for a considerable period of time.²⁷⁷

2. The text and strophic structure

2.1. The Syriac text

The text of Ps 96, according to the Leiden edition and its translation into English, is the following.²⁷⁸ The Roman numbers refer to the strophes, which will be explained below.

I	1a	Praise the Lord (with) a new song,	ܐܒܝܬܐ ܕܡܠܟܐ ܕܡܝܬܐ ܕܡܝܬܐ
	b	praise the Lord, all the earth.	ܐܒܝܬܐ ܕܡܠܟܐ ܕܡܝܬܐ ܕܡܝܬܐ
	2a	Praise the Lord and bless his name,	ܐܒܝܬܐ ܕܡܠܟܐ ܕܡܝܬܐ ܕܡܝܬܐ
	b	declare his salvation from day to day.	ܐܒܝܬܐ ܕܡܠܟܐ ܕܡܝܬܐ ܕܡܝܬܐ
	3a	And relate his glory among the peoples,	ܐܒܝܬܐ ܕܡܠܟܐ ܕܡܝܬܐ ܕܡܝܬܐ
	b	and his works among all the peoples.	ܐܒܝܬܐ ܕܡܠܟܐ ܕܡܝܬܐ ܕܡܝܬܐ

²⁷³ VanGemen 2008, 993.

²⁷⁴ Jennings and Lowe 1885, 150.

²⁷⁵ Terrien 2003, 677.

²⁷⁶ Bratcher and Reyburn 1991, 832.

²⁷⁷ Briggs and Briggs 1906–1907, 299–300; VanGemen 2008, 994.

²⁷⁸ The English translation is according to Taylor *et al.* (2020) but has been modified occasionally.

II	4a	For the Lord is great and most praiseworthy,	הַלֵּל גִּדֵּל מִי כִּי אֱלֹהֵימָהּ גָּדֹל.
	b	and fearful above all gods;	וְיִרְאֵהוּ מִכָּל אֱלֹהִים.
	5a	for all the gods of the peoples are worthless,	הַלֵּל אֱלֹהִים אֲלֵי כָּל עַמֵּי הָאָרֶץ.
	b	and the Lord made the heavens.	וְהַלֵּל יְהוָה שֶׁבָּרָא אֶת הַשָּׁמַיִם.
6a	Splendour and glory are before him,	וְהַלֵּל וְהַלֵּל מִלְּפָנָיו.	
	b	strength and praise are in his sanctuary.	וְהַלֵּל וְהַלֵּל בְּמִקְדָּשׁוֹ.
III	7a	Ascribe to the Lord, families of the peoples,	וְהַלֵּל לַיהוָה אֲנֹכִי וְעַמִּי.
	b	ascribe to the Lord glory and honour.	וְהַלֵּל לַיהוָה כְּבוֹד וְהוֹד.
	8a	Ascribe to the Lord the honour of his name,	וְהַלֵּל לַיהוָה שֵׁם כְּבוֹדוֹ.
	b	bring gifts and enter his courts.	וְהַלֵּל לַיהוָה מִנְּחֵלָתוֹ.
	9a	Worship the Lord in the court of his holiness,	וְהַלֵּל לַיהוָה בְּחֹדֶר קִדְשׁוֹ.
	b	may all the earth tremble before him.	וְהַלֵּל לַיהוָה כָּל אֶרֶץ הָאָרֶץ.
IV	10a	Say among the peoples: “The Lord reigns”;	וְהַלֵּל לַיהוָה בְּתוֹכָם.
	b	and he established the world so that it does not totter;	וְהַלֵּל לַיהוָה שֶׁבָּרָא אֶת הָעוֹלָם.
	c	he will judge the people uprightly.	וְהַלֵּל לַיהוָה שֶׁיִּשְׁפֹּט בְּצִדְקָתוֹ.
V	11a	May the heavens rejoice and may the earth exult,	וְהַלֵּל לַיהוָה שֶׁבָּרָא אֶת הָאָרֶץ.
	b	may the sea rejoice with its fullness.	וְהַלֵּל לַיהוָה שֶׁבָּרָא אֶת הַיָּם.
	12a	May the fields be strong and all that is in them,	וְהַלֵּל לַיהוָה שֶׁבָּרָא אֶת הַשָּׂדֶה.
	b	may all the trees of the forest then praise.	וְהַלֵּל לַיהוָה שֶׁבָּרָא אֶת הָעֵץ.
VI	13a	Before the Lord, who comes to judge the earth;	וְהַלֵּל לַיהוָה שֶׁבָּרָא אֶת הָאָרֶץ.
	b	he judges the world in righteousness,	וְהַלֵּל לַיהוָה שֶׁבָּרָא אֶת הָעוֹלָם.
	c	and the peoples with faithfulness.	וְהַלֵּל לַיהוָה שֶׁבָּרָא אֶת הָעַמִּים.

The analysis of Ps 96 reveals a sophisticated strophic structure, discernible through various linguistic and poetic markers. The psalm can be segmented into six distinct strophes: vv. 1–3, 4–6, 7–9, 10, 11–12 and 13. Each strophe exhibits unique characteristics that contribute to its demarcation and internal cohesion.

The initial strophe (vv. 1–3) demonstrates a robust syntactic structure, characterised by the systematic deployment of the imperative verb **עבד** ‘to praise’ in cola 1a, 1b and 2a, followed by direct objects. The strophe is further reinforced by the use of **כָּל** ‘all’ and **עַמִּים** ‘peoples’ in strategic positions, as well as prominent alliteration of **ה** and **ל**. Synonymous parallelism pervades the verses, with the final bi-colon featuring an ellipsis, effectively closing up the strophe.²⁷⁹

The second strophe (vv. 4–6) is distinguished by the repetition of the preposition **לְ** at the onset of cola 4a and 5a, and the recurrence of the root **עבד** in cola 4a, 6a and 6b. This strophe serves a transitional function, providing a rationale for the preceding strophe. Thematic and semantic coherence is maintained through expressions

²⁷⁹ For more details on the figure of closure, see the classic work by Watson (2009, 62–65).

of divine greatness and praiseworthiness, further emphasised by פ -alliteration and the repetition of אלהים 'all gods'. Furthermore, the word root עבד marks an inclusion in cola 4a and 6b.

Verses 7–9 constitute the third strophe, marked by the consistent use of imperatives at the beginning of each colon (except 9b) and the positioning of לחם as an indirect object in cola 7a, 7b and 8a. This structure parallels that of the first strophe. The strophe is enriched by thematically related vocatives יהוה and direct objects, אלהים , אלה , מלך and לחם , repetition of אלהים in vv. 7b and 8a, and alliteration of א and א in cola 7a, b, 8a, b and 9b. Colon 9b, with its distinct syntax, functions as a closure, mirroring the structure of the first strophe.

The fourth strophe (v. 10), a tricolon, is delineated by the repetition of חם in cola 10a and 10c, forming an inclusion. The strophe is further enhanced by the predominant use of פ as a dominant sound.

Verses 11–12 form the fifth strophe, characterised by imperfect verbs in each colon and synonymous parallelism. The alliteration of א and א , particularly in the final colon, which, in any case, with its initial adverb אז , functions as a closure, accentuates the strophic structure. The cosmic merism, employing terms such as שמים 'heavens', ארץ 'earth', and ים 'sea', serves to express divine sovereignty over creation and interlink the verses.

The concluding strophe (v. 13) exhibits synonymous parallelism with an elliptical verb in colon 13c. The repetition of the root שפ in cola 13a and 13b reinforces the theme of divine judgment. This strophe maintains thematic independence while providing a fitting conclusion to the psalm.

Quantitatively, the strophic structure of Ps 96 demonstrates variability in cola count: six cola in the first, second and third strophes; three cola in the fourth and sixth strophes; and four cola in the fifth strophe.

2.2. The Hebrew text

The Hebrew text of the psalm and its English translation are following:²⁸⁰

I	1a	Sing to Yhwh a new song,	שירו ליהוה שיר חדש
	b	sing to Yhwh, all the earth.	שירו ליהוה כל הארץ
	2a	Sing to Yhwh, bless his name,	שירו ליהוה ברכו שמו
	b	proclaim his salvation day after day.	בשרו מיום ליום ישועתו
	3a	Tell his glory among the nations,	ספרו בגוים כבודו
	b	his wondrous deeds among all the peoples.	בכל העמים נפלאותיו

²⁸⁰ Regarding the English translation of the Hebrew text, I acknowledge the assistance of Bible.org, with the ESV, LSB, and NABRE being particularly helpful for my work.

II	4a	For great is Yhwh and most worthy of praise,	כי גדול יהוה ומהלל מאד
	b	he is to be feared above all gods.	נורא הוא על כל אלהים
	5a	For all the gods of the peoples are worthless,	כי כל אלהי העמים אלילים
	b	but Yhwh made the heavens.	ויהוה שמים עשה
6a		Splendour and majesty are before him,	הוד והדר לפניו
	b	strength and beauty are in his sanctuary.	עז ותפארת במקדשו
III	7a	Ascribe to Yhwh, o families of the peoples,	הבו ליהוה משפחות עמים
	b	ascribe to Yhwh glory and strength.	הבו ליהוה כבוד ועז
	8a	Ascribe to Yhwh the glory of his name,	הבו ליהוה כבוד שמו
	b	bring gifts and enter his courts.	שאו מנחה ובאו לחצרותיו
	9a	Worship Yhwh in the splendour of holiness,	השתחוו ליהוה בהדרת קדש
	b	tremble before him, all the earth.	חילו מפניו כל הארץ
IV	10a	Tell all the nations, “Yhwh reigns!”	אמרו בגוים יהוה מלך
	b	yes, the world is established, it shall never be moved;	אף תכון תבל בל תמוט
	c	he will judge all peoples fairly.	ידין עמים במישרים
V	11a	Let the heavens be glad, and let the earth rejoice,	ישמחו השמים ותגל הארץ
	b	let the sea roar, and all that fills it.	ירעם הים ומלאו
	12a	Let the field exult, and all that is in it,	יעלזו שדי וכל אשר בו
	b	then all the trees of the forest will sing for joy.	אז ירגנו כל עצי יער
VI	13a	Before Yhwh, for he is coming,	לפני יהוה כי בא
	b	for he is coming to judge the earth.	כי בא לשפט הארץ
	c	He will judge the world in righteousness,	ישפט תבל בצדק
	d	and the peoples in his faithfulness.	ועמים באמונתו

The poetic analysis of Ps 96 remains unaffected by text-critical issues, allowing for a focused examination of its strophic structure. A compelling argument can be made for the division of the psalm into six distinct strophes: vv. 1–3, 4–6, 7–9, 10, 11–12 and 13.²⁸¹ Each strophe exhibits unique characteristics that contribute to its demarcation and internal cohesion.

The initial strophe (vv. 1–3) demonstrates a robust syntactic structure, characterised by the systematic deployment of the imperative שירו ליהוה ‘sing to Yhwh’ in cola 1a, 1b and 2a. This repetition, coupled with five imperatives initiating each colon, reinforces the strophe’s unity. The strophe is further reinforced by the strategic positioning of direct objects in all cola: 1a שיר חדש ‘a new song’, 2a שמו ‘his name’,

²⁸¹ Van de Lugt (2014, 72) divides Ps 96 into vv. 1–3, 4–6, 7–8, 9–10, 11–12, 13; Fokkelman (2003, 187–190) vv. 1–3, 4–6, 7–8, 9–10, 11–12, 13; Terrien (2003, 673–674) vv. 1–3, 4–6, 7–9, 10–12, 13; Seybold (1996, 380–382) vv. 1–6, 7–9, 10–13.

Presented here are a few strophic representations of other scholars as depicted by Van der Lugt: Köster (1837) vv. 1–3, 4–6, 7–10, 11–13; Sommer (1846) vv. 1–3, 4–6, 7–9, 10–12a, 12b–13; Gunkel (1926) vv. 1–3, 4–6, 7–9, 10, 11–12, 13.

2b 'his salvation', 3a 'his glory' and 3b 'his wondrous deeds' except 1b, which features a vocative כל הארץ 'all the earth'. Prepositional phrases in cola 1a, 1b and 2a enhance cohesion, while a five-fold ש-alliteration accentuates the strophic structure. The final colon 3b serves as a strophic closure, deviating from the established pattern.

The second strophe (vv. 4–6) is distinguished by the repetition of the conjunction כי at the onset of cola 4a and 5a. This strophe juxtaposes Yahweh's greatness with the insignificance of other deities, employing parallelism and א- and ע-alliteration to enhance its cohesiveness. The conjunction כי serves a transitional function, providing a rationale for the preceding strophe. Nominal clauses in cola 4a and 6b form an inclusion, further delineating the strophic boundaries.

Verses 7–9 constitute the third strophe, marked by six imperative clauses, each initiated by a verb. The phrase הבו ליהוה 'ascribe to Yhwh' appears at the beginning of cola 7a, 7b and 8a, serving as a unifying thread. The repetition of כבוד 'glory' in cola 7b and 8a, coupled with synonymous parallelism throughout, reinforces the strophe's integrity. Notably, this strophe mirrors the syntactic structure of the first.

The fourth strophe (v. 10), while thematically related to the preceding verses, stands as an independent unit. The predominant use of מ as a dominant sound in אמרו, בגוים, מלך, תמוט, עמים and במישרים accentuates the strophic structure.

Verses 11–12 form the fifth strophe, characterised by jussive verbs initiating cola 11a, 11b and 12a. The final colon 12b diverges from this pattern, effectively closing the strophe. The jussive verb marks a transitional role and signifies a tonal and thematic shift. Rich poetic imagery depicts various aspects of nature responding distinctly to a specific event, interlinking the verses. Synonymous parallelism and ל-alliteration further enhance the strophe's significance.

The final strophe (v. 13) maintains a consistent theme of Yahweh's judgment. Synonymous parallelism, repetition of the verb שפט 'to judge' in cola 13b and 13c, and the phrase כי בא 'for he is coming' in cola 13a and 13b underscore the strophe's unity. A chiasmic structure, bookended by the prepositional phrases לפני יהוה 'before Yhwh' and באמונתו 'in his faithfulness', emphasises the strophe's distinct form.²⁸²

²⁸² Van der Lugt (2014, 72–73) and Terrien (2003, 675) employ distinct methodologies for identifying strophic divisions in Ps 96. Van der Lugt focuses on linguistic markers, including transitional elements (vocatives, imperatives), lexical repetitions, and quantitative structures. Terrien utilises a combined approach of thematic progression and metrical structure, recognising the interplay between content and form in Hebrew poetry. Fokkelman (2003, 187–189) identifies the strophic markers primarily through structural and thematic patterns. The first marker is the parallel construction of Stanzas I and II, where both begin with five imperatives in their first strophes. A second marker is the anaphoric patterns: Stanza I features a triple anaphora of שירו ליהוה, while Stanza II mirrors this with a triple הבו ליהוה. The transition between strophes is also marked by shifts in predicate types, moving from imperative-dominated sections to the first appearance of imperfect verbs after 19 cola. Additionally, thematic progression serves as a marker, with an increasing emphasis on spatial concepts as the psalm develops, culminating in the final strophe, which is notably shorter and reveals the psalm's central message through duplications and keyword repetition (particularly the root שפט).

3. Word repetition and sound figures

The survey reveals that the Syriac translator, in his translation efforts, aims to adhere to the syntactic arrangements of the Hebrew source text. Therefore, the root **שבד** 'to praise / song' in vv. 1a (2x), 1b, 2a, 4a, and 12b renders **שירו** **מהלל** and **ירננו**; it is evident that the Syriac translator, in this case, would rather employ a single word to replace Hebrew words. Likewise, **יהוה** 'Lord' in vv. 1a, 1b, 2a, 5b, 7a, 7b, 8a, 9a, 10a and 13a renders **יהוה**, **כל** 'all' in vv. 1b, 3b, 4b, 5a, 9b, 12a and 12b renders **כל**, **ארץ** 'earth' in vv. 1b, 9b, 11a and 13a renders **ארץ**, **שמו** 'his name' in vv. 2a and 8a renders **שמו**, **כי** 'because' in vv. 4a and 5a renders **כי**, **אלהים** 'gods' in vv. 4b and 5a renders **אלהים**, **שמים** 'heavens' in vv. 5b and 11a renders **שמים**, **פנה** 'before' in vv. 6a, 9b and 13a renders **פנה**, **מח** 'ascribe' in vv. 7a, 7b and 8a renders **מח** and **הבו** 'world' in vv. 10b and 13b renders **תבל**. But also, cases appear, when a single Syriac word replaces two different Hebrew words: **עמים** 'peoples' in vv. 3a, 3b, 5a, 7a, 10a, 10c and 13c renders **עמים** and **בגנים** 'his courts' in vv. 8b and 9a renders **הדרת** and **לחצרותיו**, **שפט** 'may it tremble' in vv. 9b and 10b renders **תמוט** and **חילו**, **יהי** 'judge' in vv. 10c, 13a and 13b renders **יהי** and **דין**.

As a result, the Syriac translator tends to translate multiple Hebrew words with a single Syriac word, likely to increase word repetition and enhance the poetic aesthetic. Interestingly, the opposite sometimes occurs, with the translator using different words or omitting them entirely.²⁸³

A good case in point is vv. 8b, 13a and 13b, where the Syriac translator uses **חלל** and **חלל** in order to translate **בא** and omits the respective word once. This paradox will prove that using a single word for different Hebrew words is not due to the lack of Syriac vocabulary.²⁸⁴

An examination of word repetition patterns in the Syriac version of Ps 96 reveals a functional similarity to its Hebrew counterpart, with repetition serving as a significant structural and rhetorical device. This linguistic feature plays a crucial role in emphasising and delineating distinct strophes within the psalm. However, the distribution and frequency of these repetitive patterns exhibit notable variations across different strophes, suggesting a nuanced and deliberate application of this poetic technique. Of particular interest is the heightened prominence of repeated terms in the initial and third strophes, where their occurrence appears to carry greater weight in demarcating strophic boundaries.

The presented table elucidates the frequency of repetition of Hebrew and Syriac terms within their respective contexts.

²⁸³ It is important to note that this type of translational diversity—introducing variation where the source text shows repetition—is relatively uncommon in Syriac translations of Hebrew texts. See Van Peursen 2007, 63. Weitzman (1999, 93) suggests that the Syriac translators aimed to reduce monotony by incorporating variation into the text.

²⁸⁴ Carbajosa (2008, 382) acknowledges this phenomenon in his studies.

Hebrew text	Syriac text
שיר (1a 2x, 1b, 2a)	ܥܒܕ (1a 2x, 1b, 2a, 4a, 12b)
יהוה (1a, 1b, 2a, 4a, 5b, 7a, 7b, 8a, 9a, 10a, 13a)	ܡܠܟ (1a, 1b, 2a, 5b, 7a, 7b, 8a, 9a, 10a, 13a)
כל (1b, 3a, 4b, 5a, 9b, 12a, 12b)	ܚܕ (1b, 3b, 4b, 5a, 9b, 12a, 12b)
ארץ (1b, 9b, 11a, 13b)	ܐܪܥܐ (1b, 9b, 11a, 13a)
שמו (2a, 8a)	ܫܡܗ (2a, 8a)
בגוים (3a, 10a)	
כבוד (3a, 7b, 8a)	ܟܒܕܐ (3a, 7b, 8a)
עמים (3b, 5a, 7a, 10c, 13d)	ܥܡܡܐ (3a, 3b, 5a, 7a, 10a, 10c, 13c)
כי (4a, 5a, 13a, 13b)	ܟܝܐ (4a, 5a)
אלהים (4b, 5a)	ܐܠܗܐ (4b, 5a)
שמים (5b, 11a)	ܫܡܝܐ (5b, 11a)
פנה (6a, 9b, 13a)	ܦܢܐ (6a, 9b, 13a)
הבו (7a, 7b, 8a)	ܚܒܐ (7a, 7b, 8a)
	ܠܚܝܡܐ (8b, 9a)
בא (8b, 13a, 13b)	
	ܠܗܝܐ (9b, 10b)
תבל (10b, 13c)	ܬܠܬܐ (10b, 13b)
שפט (13b, 13c)	ܫܦܬܐ (10c, 13a, 13b)
112 words and 59 repetitions of 16 words	112 words and 60 repetitions of 16 words

As can be discerned from the table above, notwithstanding the parity in terms of word counting between the Syriac and Hebrew texts, the degree of recurrence is marginally greater in the Syriac text.

As regards sound figures and especially alliteration, ܥܒܕ in v. 1a, 1b and 2a, ܫܡܗ in v. 2a and ܐܠܗܐ in v. 3a participate in the alliterative pattern of ܐ. The four-fold ܡ-alliteration in cola 1a, 1b and 2a with ܡܠܟ, and ܡ in 2b underlines the first strophe. Additionally, an alliterative sequence of ܕ and ܠ in words, such as ܠܐܪܥܐ in v. 1b, ܐܠܗܐ and ܡܠܦܐ in v. 3a, ܡܠܟ in cola 3a and 3b and ܠܚܝܡܐ in v. 3b is prominent. Furthermore, *b / h* establishes a minor alliteration with ܚܒܐ and ܚܝܐ in cola 2a, 3a and 3b. It is worth noting that unintentional end rhyme appears in cola 1a and 1b with ܡܠܟ and ܐܪܥܐ and in vv. 2a, 2b, 3a and 3b with ܠܥܡܡܐ, ܠܫܡܝܐ, ܠܫܡܐ and ܠܚܝܡܐ. While the Hebrew text also applies *ש*-alliteration and the *י*-alliteration (with or without divine name) in the first strophe, it does not compete with the Syriac text. Unlike the Syriac text, the first strophe in Hebrew lacks *א*- and *ע*-alliteration, and the first strophe in Hebrew does not exhibit any discernible end rhyme.

In the second strophe, the six-fold ܡ-alliteration in cola 4a (ܡܠܟ, ܡܠܟ, ܡܠܟ, ܡܠܟ, ܡܠܟ, ܡܠܟ), 5a (ܡܠܟ), 5b (ܡܠܟ) and 6b (ܡܠܟ) highlights the strophe. Moreover, ܐ builds alliteration in vv. 4a, 4b and 5a. Further, ܠ and ܕ in cola 4b (ܠܡܠܟ, ܠܡܠܟ), 5a (ܠܡܠܟ, ܠܡܠܟ), 5b (ܠܡܠܟ) and 6b (ܠܡܠܟ) emphasise the strophe. The initial consonants ܠ and ܕ recur frequently in the second strophe, making them dominant sounds.

In cola 4b, 5a, 5b and 6b, **ṣ** and **ṣ** form a small alliteration. It seems that **ḥ** and **ʾ**, with eleven- and ten-times repetition, predominate the Hebrew strophe.

In the third strophe, five-fold **ḥ**-consonant in cola 7a, 7b and 8a (ܚܚܚ), 9a (ܚܚܚ) and 9b (ܚܚ) creates alliteration. The consonant **ṣ** builds a small alliteration in cola 7a (ܚܚܚܚ), 8a (ܚܚܚ) and 8b (ܚܚܚ). In addition, **ṣ** and **ṣ** build alliteration in cola 7a (ܚܚܚ), 7b (ܚܚܚ), 8a (ܚܚܚ), 8b (ܚܚܚ) and 9b (ܚܚܚ). A triple **ṣ**-alliteration in cola 8b (ܚܚܚܚ), 9a (ܚܚܚܚ) and 9b (ܚܚܚܚ) adds more colour to the alliterative organisation. As for the dominant sound, **ḥ** with nine times reiteration predominates the third strophe. Turning to the Hebrew text, the fourth strophe stands out with a striking alliterative union of six-fold **ḥ** across cola 7a, 7b, 8a, 9a and 9b. Additionally, a triple **ṣ**-alliteration is evident in cola 7a, 8b and 9b. The consonants **ṣ** and **ṣ** also form a small-scale alliterative arrangement across cola 7a, 7b and 9b, and the same applies to the consonant **ḥ**, as it is repeated in cola 7b, 8a and 9b.

The **ṣ**- and **ṣ**-alliteration in the fourth strophe of the Syriac text is to be noted: see ܚܚܚܚ, ܚܚܚܚ and ܚܚܚܚ in v. 10a, ܚܚܚܚ in v. 10b and ܚܚܚܚ in v. 10c. Furthermore, the consonant **ḥ** dominates the Syriac strophe, as it is repeated six times throughout. In contrast, the Hebrew fifth strophe in v. 10 is characterised by a triple **ḥ**-alliteration found in cola 10a, 10b and 10c.

The fifth strophe of the Syriac text is marked by a dominant presence of the **ṣ**-sound, which is repeated twelve times throughout, three times as the initial consonant of the colon and often at the end of words, enhancing the poetic structure and aesthetic appeal of the text. The consonant **ṣ** is noteworthy for its role in forming an inclusion within cola 11 and 12b, and the repetition of **ṣ** and **ṣ** in v. 11a with ܚܚܚ, v. 12a with ܚܚܚ, v. 12b with ܚܚܚ and ܚܚܚ create an alliterative pattern. The sixth strophe of the Hebrew text is characterised by the dominant sound of **ʾ**, reiterated six times. In addition, the consonants **ṣ** and **ṣ** generate an alliterative pattern within cola 11a, 12a and 12b, thereby resulting in the inclusion of cola 11a and 12b.

Within the sixth strophe of the Syriac text, the consonants **ṣ** and **ṣ** form a minor alliterative pattern, as evidenced in their repetition in cola 13a with ܚܚܚ and ܚܚܚ, and 13c with ܚܚܚ. Moreover, these consonants also create a chiasmus within the strophe, with ܚܚܚ at the end of colon 13a and ܚܚܚ at the beginning of colon 13b. It is notable that **ṣ** serves not only as the dominant sound but also produces an unintentional end rhyme with ܚܚܚ, ܚܚܚܚܚ and ܚܚܚܚܚ. Of particular interest is the seventh strophe of the Hebrew text, which features a remarkable alliteration by four-fold **ḥ**. Furthermore, the consonants **ṣ** and **ṣ** demonstrate not only a small-scale alliteration but also a consonantal chiasmic structure with **ṣ** at the end of colon 13a and **ṣ** at the beginning of colon 13d. In light of these observations, it becomes clear that the last two strophes of the Hebrew text are characterised by a consonantal chiasmic form, which enhances their aesthetic appeal and lends a sense of structural symmetry.

We demonstrated that the Hebrew and Syriac texts exhibit marked word repetitions and alliterative patterns, displaying distinct distributions of alliteration and word repetition within certain strophes. The strategic placement of repeated words and alliterative devices plays a pivotal role in segmenting the psalm into distinct

strophes. Notably, the Syriac text demonstrates a slightly more intensive use of alliteration when compared to its Hebrew counterpart, as well as a somewhat greater incidence of word repetition. Although each text features unique dominant sounds within its strophes, 'alef and 'ayin are the governing sounds in both texts.²⁸⁵

4. Parallelism and syntax in the Syriac psalm

When examining the verses through the lens of parallelism, it becomes evident that vv. 4, 5 and 10 maintain their extrapolative (non-synonymous) nature in both versions. This consistency might suggest a deliberate effort by the Syriac translator to preserve certain key structural elements of the original Hebrew text.

Verse 13 presents a particularly interesting case in the translation of parallelistic structures. While both the Hebrew and Syriac texts exhibit similar parallelism in this verse, there are significant differences in their execution. The Hebrew version divides the text into four cola and employs staircase parallelism constructed through a phrasal repetition of כִּי בָא in cola 13a and 13b and the verbal repetition of שָׁפַט in cola 13b and 13c. In contrast, the Syriac translator has opted for a more concise approach, omitting the first repetition and crafting a tricolon. This adaptation, while diverging from the original structure, successfully maintains a synonymous parallelism, albeit through different means. This transformation demonstrates the translator's skill in adapting Hebrew poetic structures to suit Syriac linguistic and poetic conventions while preserving the essential semantic and rhetorical functions of the verse.

In the broader context of the psalm, the Syriac text exhibits a pronounced emphasis on synonymous parallelism, particularly evident in the first, third, fifth and sixth strophes. This prevalence of synonymous parallelism may reflect either a faithful rendering of the Hebrew original or a conscious choice by the translator to emphasise this particular form of parallelism, possibly due to its effectiveness in Syriac poetic tradition.

Regarding the overall translation approach, the Syriac version generally adheres to the Hebrew word order, indicating a commitment to maintaining the structural integrity of the source text. However, deviations from this pattern are observed in instances where certain elements are omitted or added, or when the syntactic structure is modified. These alterations appear to be motivated by the translator's aim to enhance comprehensibility for the Syriac readership, suggesting a balanced approach between fidelity to the original and adaptation to the target audience.

²⁸⁵ Refer to the introductory chapter for more information on the discussion of these two consonants.

5. Quantitative poetic analysis

The metrical analysis of the Syriac psalm text is displayed in the subsequent table as it is presented in the Leiden edition.

Strophes	Verses	Words	Words in verses	Syllables	Syllables in verses	Colometry	Transliteration	
I	1a	4	8	9	17	20	<i>Šab/baḥ/lmār/yā/teš/boḥ/tā/hdat/tā</i>	ܫܒܥ ܒܚܐ ܠܡܐܪ ܝܐܬܝܫ ܒܚܐ ܬܐ ܚܕܐ ܬܐ
	b	4		8	17		<i>šab/baḥ/lmār/yā/kol/lāh/’ar/’ā</i>	ܫܒܥ ܒܚܐ ܠܡܐܪ ܝܐ ܠܐ ܚ ܐܪ ܐܐ
	2a	4	9	8	16	18	<i>Šab/baḥ/lmār/yā/wḅar/reḵ/laš/mēh</i>	ܫܒܥ ܒܚܐ ܠܡܐܪ ܝܐ ܘܒܚܐ ܪܝܫ ܠܫ ܡܝܗ
	b	5		8	19		<i>sab/bar/men/yom/lyom/pur/qā/nēh</i>	ܫܒܥ ܒܚܐ ܠܡܐܪ ܝܐ ܠܝܐܡ ܠܝܐܡ ܦܘܪ ܩܐ ܢܝܗ
	3a	3	6	8	15	16	<i>Weš/ta/’āw/b’am/mē/’i/qā/rēh</i>	ܘܝܫܬܐ ܐܘܐܘ ܒܐܡ ܡܝܐ ܝܩܐ ܪܝܗ
	b	3		7	17		<i>waḅ/kol/hon/’am/mē/’ḅā/dāw</i>	ܘܒܚܐ ܠܡܐܪ ܝܐ ܐܡ ܡܝܐ ܐܚܐ ܕܐܘܐ
II	4a	6	10	10	18	18	<i>Meṭ/ṭul/dra/bu/mār/an/wam/šab/baḥ/ ṭāḅ</i>	ܡܝܬ ܬܘܠ ܕܪܐ ܒܘ ܡܐܪ ܐܢ ܘܡܐ ܫܒܥ ܒܚܐ ܬܐ ܒܚ
	b	4		8	16		<i>waḡ/ḥil/’al/ kol/hon/’ a/lā/hē</i>	ܘܐܓ ܚܝܠ ܐܠ ܠܡܐܪ ܝܐ ܐܠ ܠܐ ܚܝܐ
	5a	6	9	13	18	28	<i>Meṭ/ṭul/dkol/hon/’ a/lā/hē/d’ am/mē/ sri/qin/’ en/non</i>	ܡܝܬ ܬܘܠ ܕܠܡܐܪ ܝܐ ܐܠ ܠܐ ܚܝܐ ܕܐܡ ܡܝܐ ܫܪܝ ܩܝܢ ܐܢ ܢܘܢ
	b	3		5	12		<i>wmār/yā/ šmay/yā/’ḅaḡ</i>	ܘܡܐܪ ܝܐ ܫܡܝܐ ܝܐ ܐܚܐ ܒܚܐ
	6a	3	6	6	13	16	<i>Zī/wā/wšub/ḥā/ qdā/māw</i>	ܙܝܐ ܘܐܘܐ ܘܫܒ ܚܐ ܩܕܐ ܡܐܘܐ
	b	3		7	19		<i>’uš/nā/wteš/boḥ/tā/ḅmaq/dšēh</i>	ܐܘܫ ܢܐܐ ܘܬܝܫ ܒܚܐ ܬܐ ܒܚܡܐ ܕܫܝܗ
III	7a	4	8	8	17	18	<i>Haḅ/lmār/yā/šar/ḅā/ṭā/d’ am/mē</i>	ܚܐ ܒܚܐ ܠܡܐܪ ܝܐ ܫܐܪ ܒܐ ܬܐ ܕܐܡ ܡܝܐ
	b	4		9	21		<i>haḅ/lmār/yā/teš/boḥ/tā/wi/qā/rā</i>	ܚܐ ܒܚܐ ܠܡܐܪ ܝܐ ܬܝܫ ܒܚܐ ܬܐ ܘܝܐ ܩܐ ܪܐ
	8a	4	8	8	15	17	<i>Haḅ/lmār/yā/i/qā/rā/ laš/mēh</i>	ܚܐ ܒܚܐ ܠܡܐܪ ܝܐ ܝܐ ܩܐ ܪܐ ܠܫ ܡܝܗ
	b	4		7	22		<i>šqol/qur/bā/nē/ w’ ol/ lḡā/rāw</i>	ܫܩܠ ܩܘܪ ܒܐ ܢܝܐ ܘܐܠ ܠܓܐ ܪܐܘܐ
	9a	4	9	7	15	21	<i>Syod/lmār/yā/bḡār/tā/dquḡ/šēh</i>	ܫܝܕ ܠܡܐܪ ܝܐ ܒܓܐܪ ܬܐ ܕܩܘܓ ܫܝܗ
	b	5		8	20		<i>tzu/’men/qdā/māw/kol/lāh/’ar/’ā</i>	ܬܝܘܐ ܡܢ ܩܕܐ ܡܐܘܐ ܠܡܐܪ ܝܐ ܐܪ ܐܐ
IV	10a	5	12	9	22	20	<i>E/mar/bēṭ/’ am/mē/dmār/yā/’ am/lek</i>	ܐܡܪ ܒܝܬ ܐܡ ܡܝܐ ܕܡܐܪ ܝܐ ܐܡ ܠܝܩ
	b	4		6	18		<i>waṭq/nāh/ lṭē/ḅēl/ dlā/’tzu</i>	ܘܬܩ ܢܐܗ ܠܬܝܐ ܒܝܠ ܕܠܐ ܬܝܘܐ
	c	3		7	17		<i>nḡun/ l’ am/mē/ ḅat/ri/ṣu/ṭā</i>	ܢܓܘܢ ܠܐܡ ܡܝܐ ܒܬܪܝ ܥܝܬܐ
V	11a	4	7	8	15	18	<i>Neḥ/don/šmay/yā/wat/duṣ/’ar/’ā</i>	ܢܝܚ ܕܢ ܫܡܝܐ ܝܐ ܘܬܐ ܕܘܥ ܐܪ ܐܐ
	b	3		7	12		<i>ner/waz/yam/mā/bam/lā/’ēh</i>	ܢܝܪ ܘܐܝܬܐ ܝܡܐ ܡܐ ܒܡܐ ܠܐ ܐܝܗ
	12a	5	11	8	19	21	<i>Ne/’šnān/ḥaq/lā/ṭā/wḡol/diṭ/bhēn</i>	ܢܝܥ ܫܢܐܢ ܚܩ ܠܐ ܬܐ ܘܓܠ ܕܝܬ ܒܝܢ
	b	6		11	25		<i>hāy/dēn/nšab/ḥun/kol/hon/’i/lā/nē/ ḡ’ā/ḅā</i>	ܚܐ ܕܝܢ ܢܫܒ ܚܘܢ ܠܡܐܪ ܝܐ ܝܐ ܠܐ ܢܝܐ ܓܐ ܐܚܐ

VI 13a	5	10	10	20	21	<i>Qdām/mār/yā/dā/ṭē/lam/dā/nāh/lar/’ā</i>	ܩܕܐܡ ܡܐܪ ܝܐܕܐ ܬܐܠܡ ܕܐܢܗܠܐܪ ܐܝܐ
b	3		8		15	<i>dā/’ēn/tē/hēl/ bza/di/qu/ṭā</i>	ܕܐ ܐܝܢ ܬܐ ܗܐܠ ܒܙܐ ܕܝ ܩܘ ܬܐ
c	2		7		14	<i>wal/’am/mē/ bhay/mā/nu/ṭā</i>	ܘܐܠ ܐܡ ܡܐ ܒܗܝ ܡܐ ܢܘ ܬܐ

The Syriac version of Ps 96, as presented in the Leiden edition, exhibits a complex structural arrangement comprising eleven bicola and two tricola. This structure can be analysed across six distinct strophes, each demonstrating unique syllabic and lexical patterns. The first strophe (vv. 1–3) consists of three bicola with a syllabic arrangement of 17, 16, 15 and a word arrangement of 8, 9, 6. The second strophe (vv. 4–6) comprises three bicola with a syllabic arrangement of 18, 18, 13 and a word arrangement of 10, 9, 6. The third strophe (vv. 7–9) contains three bicola with a syllabic arrangement of 17, 15, 15 and a word arrangement of 8, 8, 9.

The fourth strophe (v. 10) is formed by a single tricolon containing 12 syllables and 22 words. The fifth strophe (vv. 11–12) is composed of two bicola with a syllabic arrangement of 15, 19 and a word arrangement of 7, 11. Finally, the sixth strophe (v. 13) consists of a tricolon with 20 syllables and 10 words. The overall structure reveals a range of 5–13 syllables per colon and 2–6 words per colon. It is noteworthy that Ps 96 is composed of 220 syllables across the psalm, resulting in an average number of 7.85 syllables per colon.

Despite this overall inconsistency, all verses except v. 5 (13:5) demonstrate internal syllabic balance. The first, third, fourth and sixth strophes exhibit a degree of balance in both syllable and word counts. Particularly notable is the second strophe, where vv. 4 and 5 achieve an ideal syllabic balance with a ratio of 18:18. From a colometrical perspective, the Syriac text displays remarkable consistency, especially evident in the first, third and fourth strophes. However, this consistency does not extend to the consonantal count within each verse.

Specific deviations from the balanced form of colometry are observed in vv. 5, 11, 12 and 13, which present consonantal ratios of 28:12, 18:12, 21:25, and 21:15:14, respectively.

The numbers of syllables, words and consonants in strophes are gathered into the following table:

Strophes	Verses	Syllables	Words	Colometry
I	1–3	48	23	107
II	4–6	49	25	109
III	7–9	47	25	119
IV	10	22	12	55
V	11–12	34	18	75
VI	13	20	10	50

An examination of the syllabic and lexical structure, as well as the colometrical results of Ps 96 in its Syriac form, reveals a nuanced poetic composition. The first and second strophes demonstrate a balanced structure when analysed through the

lens of syllable and word count. This equilibrium extends to the third strophe, which also exhibits balance in terms of its syllabic and lexical composition. Furthermore, the fourth and sixth strophes display a similar harmony in their syllabic and word count distributions.

However, a more comprehensive analysis that includes colometrical results unveils a lack of complete congruence between the strophes. This incongruity is particularly evident in the disparate quantities of consonants per colon across different strophes.

The psalm adopts a heterosyllabic pattern, which stands in contrast to the isosyllabic metrical pattern that became prevalent in classical Syriac poetry. The psalm consists of strophes with varying numbers of cola.

Let us now direct our attention towards the Hebrew text. The following table depicts the number of syllables, words and consonants within each colon and verse.

Strophes	Verses	Words	Words in verses	Syllables	Syllables in verses	Colometry
I	1a	4	8	8	17	15 שירו/ליה/וה/שיר/ח/דש שירו ליהוה שיר חדש
	b	4		9		15 שירו/ליה/וה/כל/ה/א/רץ שירו ליהוה כל הארץ
	2a	4	8	10	21	16 שירו/ליה/וה/ב/ר/בו/ש/מו שירו ליהוה ברכו שמו
	b	4		11		18 בש/שירו/מיוס/ליוס/י/שו/ע/תו בשרו מיום ליום ישועתו
	3a	3	6	9	18	14 ספ/פ/רו/בג/גוים/כ/בו/ד/ ספרו בגוים כבודו
	b	3		9		13 ב/כל/ה/עמ/מים/נפ/ל/או/תיו בכל העמים נפלאותיו
II	4a	5	10	11	19	18 כי/ג/דול/יה/וה/ו/מ/ה/ל/ל/מ/אד כי גדול יהוה ומהלל מאד
	b	5		8		16 נורא/הוא/על/כל/א/ל/הים נורא הוא על כל אלהים
	5a	5	8	11	17	19 כי/כל/א/ל/הי/ה/עמ/מים/א/לי/לים כי כל אלהי העמים אלילים
	b	3		7		12 ויה/וה/ש/מים/ע/שה ויהוה שמים עשה
	6a	3	6	7	16	12 הוד/ו/ה/דר/ל/פ/ניו הוד והדר לפניו
	b	3		9		14 עז/ו/תפ/א/רת/ב/מק/ד/שו עז ותפארת במקדשו
III	7a	4	8	10	18	18 ה/בו/ל/יה/וה/מש/פ/חות/עמ/מים הבו ליהוה משפחות עמים
	b	4		9		15 ה/בו/ל/יה/וה/כ/בוד/ו/עז הבו ליהוה כבוד ועז
	8a	4	8	9	20	15 ה/בו/ל/יה/וה/כ/בוד/ש/מו הבו ליהוה כבוד שמו
	b	4		11		19 ש/או/מנחה/ו/ב/או/ל/חצ/רו/תיו שאו מנחה ובאו לחצרותיו
	9a	4	8	12	21	19 הש/ת/ח/ו/ו/ל/יה/וה/ב/הד/רת/ק/דש/ השתחוו ליהוה בהדרת קדש
	b	4		9		15 ח/לו/מפ/פ/ניו/כל/ה/א/רץ חילו מפניו כל הארץ

IV 10a	4	12	9	25	16	אמ/רו/ בג/גו/ים/ יה/וה/ מ/לך	אמרו בגוים יהוה מלך
b	5		8		15	אף/ תכ/בון/ ת/בל/ בל/ תמ/מוט	אף תכון תבל בל תמוט
c	3		8		15	י/דין/ עמ/מים/ ב/מי/ש/רים	ידין עמים במישרים
V 11a	4	7	13	22	18	יש/מ/חו/הש/ש/מ/ים/ו/ת/גל/ה/א/רץ	ישמחו השמים ותגל הארץ
b	3		9		12	י/ר/עם/ הי/ים/ ו/מ/ל/או	ירעם הים ומלאו
12a	5	10	10	20	15	י/ע/לז/ ש/די/ ו/כל/ א/שר/ בו/	יעלז שדי וכל אשר בו
b	5		10		15	אז/ י/רנ/ג/נו/ כל/ ע/צי/ י/ער	אז ירננו כל עצי יער
VI 13a	4	8	6	13	12	לפ/ני/ יה/וה/ כי/ בא	לפני יהוה כי בא
b	4		7		12	כי/ בא/ לש/פט/ ה/א/רץ	כי בא לשפט הארץ
c	3	5	7	15	11	יש/פט/ ת/בל/ ב/צ/דק	ישפט תבל בצדק
d	2		8		12	ו/עמ/מים/ ב/א/מו/ג/תו	ועמים באמונתו

The Hebrew text, when analysed colometrically, demonstrates a generally balanced ratio of consonants per colon and per verse, with notable exceptions in vv. 5 (19:12), 9 (19:15) and 11 (18:12). The syllabic ratio in the Hebrew text shows balance in most verses, with deviations observed in vv. 4 (11:8), 5 (11:7), 8 (9:11) and 11 (13:9). When compared to its Hebrew counterpart, the Syriac text exhibits a more balanced syllabic ratio, although its colometrical ratio is less balanced than that of the Hebrew version. It can be suggested that such balances have contributed to the advancement of isosyllabism in classical Syriac poetry.

A detailed examination of the Hebrew psalm's strophic structure, based on word and syllable counts, yields the following composition: the first strophe contains 22 words and 56 syllables; the second, 24 words and 52 syllables; the third, 24 words and 59 syllables; the fourth, 12 words and 25 syllables; the fifth, 17 words and 42 syllables; and the sixth, 13 words and 28 syllables. This distribution reveals interesting patterns of balance within the psalm. The first and second strophes collectively, as well as the fourth and sixth strophes together, display a balanced degree in both word and syllable counts. Moreover, the first, second, and third strophes exhibit balance in word count. The psalm's overall structure comprises 262 syllables distributed across 29 cola, resulting in an average of 9.03 syllables per colon. The range of syllables per colon varies between 6 and 13, while the word count per colon ranges from 2 to 5.

The consonantal analysis of the Hebrew text further illuminates its structural composition. The distribution of consonants across the strophes is as follows: 94 in the first, 91 in the second, 26 in the third, 101 in the fourth, 46 in the fifth, and 47 in the sixth. This distribution suggests a tendency towards balanced length in terms of colometry across the strophes since the near-perfect balance can be observed between the first and second strophes (94:91) and between the fifth and sixth strophes (46:47).

6. Conclusion

The Syriac translator of Ps 96 employs a sophisticated array of techniques to demarcate strophes, creating a well-structured poetic composition. These strophic markers can be categorised into several key strategies: (1) Syntactic patterns, involving the consistent use of specific verb forms or grammatical structures at the beginning of cola within a strophe. (2) Lexical repetition, where certain words or roots are strategically repeated to define strophic boundaries or create internal cohesion. (3) Phonetic devices, particularly alliteration, which serves to unify cola within a strophe. (4) Inclusion, a technique where similar words or phrases appear at the beginning and end of a strophe, effectively bracketing the unit. (5) Thematic coherence, ensuring that each strophe maintains a distinct thematic focus. (6) Verbal patterns, where shifts in verb tenses or forms signal strophic transitions. (7) Closing devices, ellipsis and distinct syntactic structures to signal the end of a strophe. (8) Transitional elements that link one strophe to another while maintaining their individual integrity. This diverse toolkit of strophic markers not only segments the psalm into distinct units but also enhances its overall poetic structure, rhetorical impact, and mnemonic quality in the Syriac rendition.

An analysis of P-Ps reveals a remarkable congruence with MT regarding word order. The Syriac rendition exhibits a plethora of poetic devices, indicating the translator's comprehensive awareness of Hebrew scribal poetic techniques. These include parallelism, lexical repetition, alliteration, and specific poetic markers for strophic delineation. However, it is evident that the Syriac translator implemented these features in a nuanced and slightly divergent manner.

In the pursuit of enhanced clarity and comprehensibility, the Syriac translator judiciously employs contextual omissions or additions. This can be attributed to the distinct syntactical and structural framework of the Syriac language compared to the source language. To achieve greater fidelity in translation, the translator necessarily adapts the syntax and structure to align with the target language norms.

Parallelism, alliteration, and lexical repetition emerge as the most salient poetic attributes in both the Syriac and Hebrew versions of Ps 96. Additionally, the adept utilisation of chiasmus and inclusion in both versions significantly contributes to the aesthetic framework. The Syriac text's adherence to Hebrew word order facilitates the incorporation of parallelism as a fundamental component. Within strophes, the Syriac version demonstrates a higher diversity of alliterative units than the Hebrew text, playing a more crucial role in strophic demarcation. Similarly, the Syriac text exhibits a marginally higher degree of lexical repetition than its Hebrew counterpart.

Both texts benefit from distinctive soundscapes, with the Syriac version displaying pre-eminence in this aspect. Consequently, the Syriac text possesses enhanced rhythm and flow, rendering it more aesthetically appealing. Notably, the Syriac text exhibits unintentional end rhyme in certain verses, further distinguishing it from the Hebrew text. Overall, the Hebrew text appears less effective in constructing a cohesive poetic framework.

Regarding metrical patterns, the analysis reveals that while the Hebrew text is characterised by a tendency towards colometrical balance, its syllabic arrangement demonstrates marginally greater uniformity. Conversely, the Syriac text's consistent metrical pattern revolves around syllabic counting, although the colometry exhibits some balance in certain verses. The extent of the Syriac translator's awareness of colometry remains uncertain.

While the findings indicate that the metrical patterns and strophic structures are not entirely congruent with those found in classical Syriac poetry, they share features such as lexical repetition, thematic coherence, parallelism, and occasional rhythmic and isosyllabic patterns. These similarities suggest a potential connection between the structure of P-Ps and characteristics observed in classical Syriac poetry.

This psalm exhibits heterosyllabic metrical patterns and strophes with varying numbers of cola. The Hebrew psalm's overall structure comprises an average of 9.03 syllables per colon. In contrast, the Syriac psalm averages 7.85 syllables per colon. The findings indicate that the average syllable count in the Syriac text of Ps 96 is lower than that of the preceding psalms, specifically Ps 8, 19, 29, and 86. In contrast, the syllable count in the Hebrew text of Ps 96 is comparable to that of Ps 8.

CHAPTER SEVEN: PSALM 120

1. General information

“Determination of both the genre and primary setting of Psalm 120 is hampered by difficulty in assessing its time perspective and degree of metaphor,” says Leslie C. Allen about Ps 120.²⁸⁶ The psalm is the first of the songs of Ascent in Ps 120–134. The reason why Ps 120 has been selected as the initial song of the collection is unsettled.²⁸⁷ As a lament, the psalm is a complaint of the speaker, who is being prosecuted by his enemies, begging for God’s help. However, v. 1 could also be understood as if his prayer had already been answered so that the psalm would be a thanksgiving for an answered prayer.²⁸⁸ Even though this is a short psalm, it is pretty complex. In addition, Allen points out that it is difficult to understand the structure of the psalm because it has “a disjointed ring on first reading”.²⁸⁹

2. The text and strophic structure

2.1. The Syriac text

The text of Ps 120, according to the Leiden edition and its translation into English, is the following.²⁹⁰ The Roman numbers refer to the strophes, which will be explained below.

I	1a	I called out to the Lord in my affliction,	ܠܥܠܝܢܐ ܕܡܠܝܢܐ ܕܡܝܢܐ.
	b	and he answered me.	ܡܠܝܢܐ ܕܡܠܝܢܐ.
	2a	The Lord delivered me	ܡܠܝܢܐ ܡܝܢܐ ܡܠܝܢܐ ܡܠܝܢܐ. ²⁹¹
	b	from the lips of the wicked,	ܡܠܝܢܐ ܡܠܝܢܐ ܡܠܝܢܐ.
	c	and from deceitful tongues.	ܡܠܝܢܐ ܡܠܝܢܐ ܡܠܝܢܐ.
	3a	What will they give you, and what will they add to you,	ܡܠܝܢܐ ܡܠܝܢܐ ܡܠܝܢܐ ܡܠܝܢܐ.
	b	these deceitful tongues?	ܡܠܝܢܐ ܡܠܝܢܐ.

²⁸⁶ Allen 2002, 198.

²⁸⁷ Terrien 2003, 808.

²⁸⁸ Bratcher / Reyburn 1991, 1047.

²⁸⁹ Allen 2002, 198.

²⁹⁰ The English translation is according to Taylor et al. (2020) but have been modified occasionally.

²⁹¹ The reading ܡܠܝܢܐ ܡܠܝܢܐ is justified by manuscripts 6t1, 8a1, 9a1, 9t3, 10t2,4,5, 11t1, 12t1, 12t1-4,7 given in the text critical apparatus of the Leiden edition (1980, 150).

- II 4a The arrows of a strong man are sharp, .רַחֲמַיִם יְהוֹדֵהוּ עֵצִי
b like the burning coals of an oak. .וְהָאֵשׁ כְּחֵטְאֵי הָעֵץ
- III 5a Woe to me that my pilgrimage has lasted a long time, .וְהָיָה לִי מִדְּבַר הַיָּדָה
b and I dwelt in the tent of Kedar! .וְהָיָה לִי מִדְּבַר הַיָּדָה
6 I have dwelt for a long time with those who hate .וְהָיָה לִי מִדְּבַר הַיָּדָה
peace. .וְהָיָה לִי מִדְּבַר הַיָּדָה
7a And I was speaking peace, .וְהָיָה לִי מִדְּבַר הַיָּדָה
b and they were fighting with me. .וְהָיָה לִי מִדְּבַר הַיָּדָה

The analysis of Ps 120 reveals distinct strophic markers that delineate its structural composition. The psalm appears to be organised into three strophes: vv. 1–3, 4 and 5–7. This tripartite structure is supported by various linguistic and thematic elements.

The initial strophe, encompassing vv. 1–3, is characterised by its thematic focus on divine intervention against deceitful tongues. This theme is reinforced by the repetition of לֵשׁ נִסְתָּר in vv. 2c and 3b, creating a symmetrical response to the dual occurrence of לֵשׁ in vv. 1a and 2a. The strophe's cohesion is further enhanced by its rich alliterative pattern. Notably, the consonant ד appears at the beginning of vv. 1a and 3b, forming an inclusion, while ו is prominently featured at the onset of cola 2a, 2b, 2c and 3a, complemented by לֵשׁ following ד in v. 1a.

Verse 4, constituting the second strophe, introduces a thematic shift through a singular comparative proverb. This strophe is distinguished by its alliteration of the consonant נ, marking a transition in the psalm's progression.

The final strophe, encompassing vv. 5–7, is demarcated by the emphatic phrase וְהָיָה, signalling a significant thematic transition. This section is characterised by a retrospective examination of past circumstances and exhibits several repetitive elements. These include the waw copula at the beginning of vv. 5b, 7a and 7b complemented by the initial phrase וְהָיָה in v. 5a. Additionally, the preposition עִם 'with' recurs in vv. 6a and 7b, while שָׁלוֹם 'peace' appears in vv. 6a and 7a. The strophe's lexical coherence is further reinforced by the semantic relationship between מִדְּבַר הַיָּדָה 'my pilgrimage', מִדְּבַר הַיָּדָה 'tent', and וְהָיָה לִי מִדְּבַר הַיָּדָה 'I have dwelt' in vv. 5a, 5b and 6, respectively. Moreover, the alliterative use of the consonants נ and ד serves to interlink the verses more cohesively.

In terms of structural composition, Ps 120 exhibits an asymmetrical distribution of cola across its three strophes: seven cola in the first, two in the second, and five in the third.

2.2. The Hebrew text

The Hebrew text and its English translation of the psalm are following:²⁹²

I	1a	In my distress unto Yhwh,	אל יהוה בצרתה לי
	b	I cried out, and he answered me.	קראתי ויענני
	2a	Deliver my soul, o Yhwh,	יהוה הצילה נפשי
	b	from lying lip,	משפת שקר
	c	from a deceitful tongue.	מלשון רמיה
	3a	What shall it be given unto you,	מה יתן לך
	b	and what shall it do unto you,	ומה יסיף לך
	c	deceitful tongue?	לשון רמיה
II	4a	Sharp arrows of the mighty,	חצי גבור שנונים
	b	with coals of juniper.	עם גחלי רתמים
III	5a	Woe to me, that I sojourned in Meshech, ²⁹³	אויה לי כי גרתי משך
	b	that I dwelt in the tents of Kedar!	שכנתי עם אהלי קדר
	6a	My soul has long dwelt,	רבת שכנה לה נפשי
	b	with <u>those</u> who hated peace.	עם שונאי שלום
	7a	I am <u>for peace</u> , but when I speak,	אני לשלום וכי אדבר
	b	they are for war.	המה למלחמה

There is a problem in colon 6b related to the word שונא ‘him who hates.’ Some scholars and the editors of BHS hold the view that the word should be read in plural *constructus* שונאי ‘them who hate,’ like its Syriac counterpart. Similarly, the LXX has plural μετὰ τῶν μισούντων and Vg. *cum his qui oderunt*.²⁹⁴ However, some scholars advocate the singular form. For example, Dahood thinks it is characteristic of passionate laments to shift from plural to singular, and singular forms in v. 3 determine the singular form in v. 6.²⁹⁵ Besides, to achieve a better syntax and parallelism in v. 7, preposition ל should be added to the word שלום (לשלום); the parallelism suggests ‘for peace’ to correspond with ‘for war.’²⁹⁶

²⁹² Regarding the English translation of the Hebrew text, I acknowledge the assistance of Bible.org, with the ESV, LSB, and NABRE being particularly helpful for my work.

²⁹³ According to Taylor et al. (2020, 533), the problem of differences in MT and P-Ps arises from different vocalisations of the Hebrew words. Greek and Syriac translators have understood משך as a Pual verb ‘long drawn out’ instead of the MT proper noun Meshech, while the MT verb גרתי ‘I sojourned’ was understood by the Greek and Syriac translators as a noun ‘my sojourning’ rather than a verb.

²⁹⁴ Allen 2002, 361; Alter 2009, 436; DeClaissé-Walford et al. 2014, 892; Oesterley 1962, 501; Dimock 1791, 288; Horsley 1845, 361; Seybold 1996, 476; Kraus 1993, 1007.

²⁹⁵ Dahood 1965, 198.

²⁹⁶ Kissane 1954, 245; Dimock 1791, 288.

An analysis of Ps 120 reveals a tripartite strophic structure comprising vv. 1–3, 4 and 5–7.²⁹⁷ This division is supported by several linguistic and thematic elements characteristic of Hebrew poetry.

The initial strophe, encompassing vv. 1–3, is delineated by multiple factors. Primarily, the repetition of the phrase לשון רמיה ‘deceitful tongue’ in cola 2c and 3c serves as a unifying element. Additionally, the correlation between יהוה and לי ‘to me’ in colon 1a, juxtaposed with נפשי ‘my soul’ in colon 2a, reinforces the strophic structure. Notably, this strophe exhibits a striking alliterative pattern, with the consonant מ recurring at the beginning of cola 2b, 2c, 3a and 3b, a feature also observed in the Syriac translation.

Verse 4, constituting the second strophe, stands as an independent bicolon. Its distinctiveness is twofold: thematically, it diverges from the surrounding content, and stylistically, it showcases a remarkable end rhyme pattern in the words שנונים ‘sharp’, עם ‘with’, and רתמים ‘juniper’.

The final strophe, comprising vv. 5–7, is demarcated by the emphatic phrase אויה לי, which signals a significant thematic shift and establishes the strophe’s coherence. This section is characterised by a semantic correlation among the words גרתי ‘I sojourned’, שכנתי ‘I dwelt’, and אהלי ‘tents’ in vv. 5–6, creating a lexical field related to dwelling and sojourning. Furthermore, the repetition of שלום ‘peace’ in cola 6b and 7a contributes to the strophe’s cohesion. The strophe’s unity is further enhanced by the significant repetition of initial consonants א and ש. Moreover, an inclusion is formed by the מ-consonant in cola 5a and 7b, effectively bookending the strophe.²⁹⁸

This structural analysis of Ps 120 demonstrates the intricate interplay of thematic, lexical, and phonetic elements in Hebrew poetry, highlighting the sophisticated compositional techniques employed in biblical literature.

3. Word repetition and sound figures

The survey underlines the general impression that the Syriac translator intends to follow the Hebrew word order strictly. Therefore, ܠܕܝܢ ‘Lord’ in vv. 1a and 2a

²⁹⁷ Van der Lugt (2014, 348) outlines Ps 120 into vv. 1–2, 3–4, 5–6, 7; Fokkerman (2000, 294–295) vv. 1–2, 3–4, 5–7 (2+2+3 lines); similarly, Terrien (2003, 808); Seybold (1996, 476) vv. 1, 2–7.

Furthermore, presented here are a few strophic representations of other scholars as depicted by Van der Lugt (2014, 348): Ewald (1866) and Kraus (1978) vv. 1–2, 3–4, 5–7 (4+4+6 cola); Gunkel (1926) vv. 1–2, 3–4, 5–6, 7 (2+2+2+1 lines); Weber (2003), Stocks (2012).

²⁹⁸ Van der Lugt (2014, 346) presents a tripartite methodology, combining thematic analysis, identification of transition markers, and examination of verbal repetition patterns. Fokkerman (2000, 128) utilises a comprehensive approach, integrating thematic shifts, linguistic structures such as duplications and inclusions, structural patterns including balanced cola and mirrored verse structures, syntactic variations, and syllabic arrangements. Terrien (2003, 808) adopts a dual approach, focusing on thematic progression and metrical structure, particularly on the alternation between 3+2 and 2+3 stress unit patterns.

renders יהוה *yeḥweh* ‘my soul’ in vv. 2a and 6a נפשי *neṣṣi*, ‘deceitful tongues’ in vv. 2c and 3b לשון רמיה *lišon ramīa*, ‘what’ twice in v. 3a מה *ma*, ‘peace’ in vv. 6a and 7a שלום *šālôm*, ‘with’ in vv. 6a and 7b עם *em*. However, the Syriac translator avoids the repetition of the verb שכן ‘dwell’ in cola 5b and 6a by using *ܫܚܝܬ* and *ܫܚܝܬܐ* in its stead. This is surprising since the double שכן in Hebrew seems to associate with the double שלום in the next two cola; we do not know whether the translator just wanted to have synonyms or be more specific about the nuances of dwelling.

The repetition of words in the Syriac text plays the same role as in Hebrew when highlighting various strophes. In addition, the use of the preposition *ܗܝ* in vv. 2b and 2c emphasises the first strophe slightly stronger than the inseparable *-ܡ* in the Hebrew MT. Whereas the Hebrew text has the preposition עם thrice in vv. 4b, 5b and 6b, the Syriac translation uses *ܡܚܝܬ* differently, only in vv. 6 and 7b, but in terms of the third strophe, the result is even more efficient: in v. 6, the preposition relates to those “who hate peace,” in v. 7b to those “fighting with me.”

It can be concluded that in the Syriac text, word repetition has the same function as in the Hebrew text and is only slightly less intensive. Here is a table illustrating the repetition frequency of Hebrew and Syriac words.

Hebrew text	Syriac text
יהוה (1a, 2a)	ܗܝܬ (1a, 2a)
נפשי (2a, 6a)	ܢܦܨܝ (2a, 6)
	ܗܝ (2b, 2c)
לשון רמיה (2c, 3c)	ܠܫܢܐ ܪܡܝܬܐ (2c, 3b)
מה (3a, 3b)	ܡܗ (3a 2x)
שכן (5b, 6a)	
שלום (6b, 7a)	ܫܠܡܐ (6, 7a)
עם (4b, 5b, 6b)	ܡܚܝܬ (6, 7b)
49 words and 17 repetitions of 8 words	49 words and 16 repetitions of 8 words

As for the sound figures and especially the alliteration, the remarkable, altogether sixfold *ܡ*-alliteration at the beginning of cola 1a and 2a (*ܡܚܝܬ*), 2b and 2c (*ܡܚܝܬ*), and twice in 3a (*ܡܗ*) highlights the first strophe. It is worth noting that the Hebrew text also emphasises the first strophe with the *מ*-alliteration at the beginning of vv. 2b, 2c, 3a and 3b, but it does not contest the Syriac version. Furthermore, through the specific use of the consonant *ܕ* at the beginning of cola 1a (*ܕܗܝܬ*) and 3b (*ܕܠܫܢܐ*), the third strophe has a definite inclusion. Still, it is complemented by other occurrences of the preposition in 2b (*ܕܡܚܝܬ*), twice in 3a (*ܕܡܗ*) and through the repetition of *ܕܠܫܢܐ* in 2c and 3b. Like in the case of *ܡ*, the repetition of *ܕ* is sixfold, making the first strophe an exceptional case. The Hebrew text can contest only with *ל* and *לך* in 1a, 3a and 3b. Additionally, the consonant *ܫ* tends to occur in word-initial position: five times in cola 2a (*ܫܦܥܝ*), 2c and 3c (*ܫܠܡܬܐ*), 3a (*ܫܠܡܐ* and *ܫܠܡܬܐ*). Again, nothing is comparable in the Hebrew text. Even if some cases are not intended, the result undoubtedly shows the predominance of alliteration in the Syriac translation.

The phenomenon is equally vital in the second strophe, where the threefold alliteration of ܐ in Syriac outrivals the twofold alliteration of ʔ in Hebrew. However, the Syriac does not follow the end-rhyme effect of the Hebrew suffix ים- at the end of both cola 4a and b. The third strophe is rich because of ܐ and ܐ, while strikes with six cases: 5a (ܐܐܐܐ), 6 (ܐܐܐܐ, ܐܐܐܐ), 7a (ܐܐܐ) and 7b (ܐܐ). This seems to render the Hebrew alliteration of laryngeals in 5a (אווה), 5b (עם אהלי), 6b (עם) and 7a (אני, אדבר). The Syriac translator has probably also noticed the repetition of the root שכן and the word שלום in 5b–7a, i.e., the alliteration and overall repetition of ש (משך in v. 5a, שכנתי in 5b, שכנה and נפשי in 6a, שלום in 6b, שלום in 7a), since ܐ appears in 5b (ܐܐܐܐ), 6 (ܐܐܐ) and 7a (ܐܐܐ). Whereas the Hebrew text can be highlighted through the preposition ל in vv. 5a, 6a and 7a, the Syriac translation colours v. 7 with the alliteration of ܐ.

Both renditions exhibit notable lexical repetition and alliterative patterns, with consonantal repetition playing a pivotal role in delineating strophic structures. However, the manifestation and intensity of these phonetic features differ markedly between the two linguistic versions.

The Syriac text demonstrates a more pronounced and systematic employment of alliteration. In the initial strophe, the consonants ܐ, ܐ and ܐ predominate, with ܐ particularly salient due to its recurrence at the commencement of cola. The second strophe is characterised by the prevalence of ܐ-alliteration, while the third strophe is distinguished by the dominance of ܐ and ܐ. This deliberate phonetic structuring creates distinct sound profiles for each strophe, effectively demarcating the poem's sections through auditory cues.

In contrast, the Hebrew version exhibits a less intensive alliterative distribution. While it does manifest specific soundscapes within different strophes, these are not as unambiguously defined as in the Syriac counterpart. Though present, the Hebrew text's sound patterns are more subtle and less rigidly aligned with strophic divisions.

4. Parallelism and syntax in the Syriac psalm

Parallelism in both versions is notably limited, with only one verse (5) appearing as a bicolon with synonymous parallelism in both texts. This verse, however, exhibits explicitly elliptic parallelism, adding a layer of complexity to its structure. Another instance of limited synonymous parallelism is observed in cola 2b–c, which form part of an extrapolative tricolon in conjunction with 2a.

The scarcity of synonymous parallelism in the Syriac psalm is a significant finding. This paucity extends to classical extrapolative bicola, which are present only in vv. 4 and 7. The relative absence of these parallel structures in the Syriac version can be attributed to its close adherence to the Hebrew text's wording, which itself demonstrates the infrequent use of synonymous parallelism.

A noteworthy example of textual refinement in the Syriac translation is evident in v. 7. Here, the translator has made several modifications to enhance the flow and clarity of the text:

- elimination of the double ל -construction present in the Hebrew text;
- reformulating Hebrew nominal clauses with verbal clauses;
- introduction of the preposition ח , absent in the Hebrew text, at the verse's conclusion;
- transformation of the verse into a standard extrapolative bicolon with explicit content.

These alterations demonstrate the translator's effort to improve the text's coherence and accessibility while maintaining its essential meaning.

Generally, the Syriac text closely follows the Hebrew word order. However, deviations occur when the translator opts to omit or add elements or modify the syntactic structure. These changes appear to be motivated by a desire for greater precision and clarity compared to the Hebrew original.

5. Quantitative poetic analysis

The following table shows the metrics of the Syriac psalm according to the Leiden edition by counting both syllables and words in separate cola.

Strophes	Verses	Words	Words in verses	Syllables	Syllables in verses	Colometry	Transliteration	
I	1a	3	4	5	7	16	<i>Lmār/yā/ bul/ṣān/ qrēṭ</i>	לחנן כהנא ב מנחם
	b	1		2		5	<i>wa' nān</i>	והנן
	2a	3	9	5	20	13	<i>Mār/yā /wpaṣ/yāh/ lnaṣ</i>	מנחם נחמי בן לנחם
	b	3		7		12	<i>men/ sef/wā/ṭā/ ḏ'aw/wā/lē</i>	מן ספ מנחם נחמי
	c	3		8		14	<i>wmen/ leš/ṣā/nē /nak/kul/ṭā/nē</i>	ומנחם נחמי נחמי
	3a	6	8	10	17	22	<i>Mā/nā/net/lun/lāḳ/wmā/nā/naws/ fun/ lāḳ</i>	מנחם נחמי נחמי נחמי
	b	2		7		11	<i>leš/ṣā/nē /nak/kul/ṭā/nē</i>	לחנן נחמי
II	4a	3	6	6	12	17	<i>Gē/rāw/ dgab/rā/ šni/nin/</i>	גנח נחמי נחמי
	b	3		6		14	<i>'aḳ/ gum/rē /ḏḅa/lu/ṭā</i>	אח נחמי נחמי
III	5a	4	7	7	13	16	<i>Wāy/li/ ḏtaw/tā/ḅūt/ 'ag/raṭ</i>	והנן נחמי נחמי
	b	3		6		15	<i>waš/rēṭ/ bmašk/nā /ḏqē/ḏār</i>	והנן נחמי נחמי
	6	7	7	12	12	29	<i>So/yā/ 'em/raṭ/ naṣ/ 'am/ 'ay/lēn/ dsā/nēn/ šlā/mā</i>	סנח נחמי נחמי נחמי
	7a	4	8	7	14	16	<i>We/nā/ šlā/mā/mmal/lēl/ wēṭ</i>	והנן נחמי נחמי
	b	4		7		18	<i>when/non/meṭ/kat/šin/wāw/ 'am</i>	והנן נחמי נחמי

The initial strophe encompasses vv. 1–3, exhibiting a diverse colometrical arrangement. It begins with a bicolon in v. 1, characterised by 7 syllables and 4 words, followed by a tricolon in v. 2, containing 20 syllables and 9 words. The strophe concludes with another bicolon in v. 3, consisting of 17 syllables and 8 words. This variability in syllabic and lexical count within the strophe suggests a deliberate poetic strategy, possibly aimed at emphasising certain elements through asymmetrical structuring. Besides, the findings showcase that vv. 2 and 3 are close to each other.

The second strophe, confined to v. 4, presents a single bicolon with 12 syllables and 6 words. This concise structure stands in contrast to the more elaborate first strophe, potentially serving as a pivotal point in the psalm’s thematic development.

The final strophe, encompassing vv. 5–7, demonstrates a more balanced composition. It comprises two bicola (vv. 5 and 7) and a monocolon (v. 6), with a syllabic distribution of 13:12:14 and a word count of 7:7:8, respectively. This strophe exhibits a roughly consistent syllabic and lexical balance.

Colometrical analysis reveals an attempt at equilibrium in cola length, particularly evident in verses 2, 4, 5 and 7. The consonantal distribution in these verses (13:12:14, 17:14, 16:15, and 16:18, respectively) indicates a tendency towards balanced cola, though perfect symmetry is not achieved. This near-balance might be interpreted as a deliberate poetic device, creating a sense of rhythm while maintaining subtle variations.

The overall syllabic range per colon spans from 2 to 12, while the word count varies from 1 to 6 per colon. The Syriac text comprises 95 syllables distributed across 14 cola, yielding an average of 6.78 syllables per colon. It is noteworthy that Ps 120 has the fewest syllables per colon compared to the other psalms examined in this survey.

The number of syllables, words and consonants in strophes gives the following tabulated result:

Strophes	Verses	Syllables	Words	Colometry
I	1–3	44	21	93
II	4	12	6	31
III	5–7	39	22	94

The analysis of the structure of the Syriac Ps 120 reveals intricate patterns of syllabic, colometrical, and lexical distribution, demonstrating a sophisticated approach to poetic composition. The first and third strophes exhibit comparable syllable counts, although they do not achieve perfect balance. This near-equilibrium suggests a deliberate structural design, potentially emphasising the thematic relationship between the opening and closing sections of the psalm. The similarity in length between these strophes, as evidenced by both syllabic and word count analyses, further reinforces this structural parallelism.

A distinctive characteristic of this psalm is the structural composition of the initial verse exhibiting a notable imbalance, which can be interpreted as intentional rather than incidental. It can be argued that this verse functions as a thesis for the entirety of the psalm.

The colometrical ratio and word count are balanced, in contrast to the syllabic ratio observed in the first and third strophes. This variability in metrics arrangement within strophes adds to the poem's structural complexity and serves to highlight and emphasise particular content.

The psalm utilises a heterosyllabic metrical pattern, particularly noteworthy within the Syriac psalm. Nonetheless, it maintains a tendency toward some kind of isosyllabism. The psalm's structure is characterised by strophes containing varying numbers of cola.

Let us now turn to the Hebrew text. The following table illustrates the respective number of syllables and words in each cola as well as in verses. In addition, the colometrical results are presented.

Strophes	Verses	Words	Words in verses	Syllables	Syllables in verses	Colometry		
I	1a	4	6	8	16	13	אל/ יהוה/ בצ/ צר/ תה/ לי	אל יהוה בצרתה לי
	b	2		8		11	קרא/ תי/ וי/ ענ/ גי	קראתי ויענני
	2a	3	7	7	18	13	יהוה/ הצ/ צי/ לה/ נפ/ שי	יהוה הצילה נפשי
	b	2		5		7	מש/ ש/ פת/ ש/ קר	משפת שקר
	c	2		6		9	מל/ ל/ שון/ ר/ מי/ יה	מלשון רמיה
	3a	3	8	5	15	7	מה/ ית/ תן/ ל/ ד	מה יתן לך
	b	3		5		9	ו/ מה/ י/ סיף/ לך	ומה יסיף לך
	c	2		5		8	ל/ שון/ ר/ מי/ יה	לשון רמיה
II	4a	3	6	7	14	13	חצ/ צי/ גב/ בור/ ש/ נו/ גים	חצי גבור שגונים
	b	3		7		11	עם/ ג/ ח/ לי/ ר/ ת/ מים	עם גחלי רתמים
III	5a	5	9	8	17	15	או/ יה/ לי/ כי/ גר/ תי/ מ/ שך	אוייה לי כי גרתי משך
	b	4		9		14	ש/ כנ/ תי/ עם/ א/ ה/ לי/ ק/ דר	שכנתי עם אהלי קדר
	6a	4	7	8	14	13	רב/ בת/ ש/ כ/ נה/ לה/ נפ/ שי	רבתי שכנה לה נפשי
	b	3		6		10	עם/ שו/ נ/ אי/ ש/ לום	עם שונאי שלום
	7a	4	6	10	16	15	א/ נ/ ל/ ש/ לום/ ו/ כי/ א/ דב/ בר	אני לשלום וכי אדבר
	b	2		6		9	המ/ מה/ למ/ מל/ ח/ מה	המה למלחמה

Examining the Hebrew text of Ps 120 reveals intricate patterns in its colometrical, syllabic and lexical structures, offering insights into its compositional sophistication.

The colometrical analysis demonstrates a balanced ratio throughout the psalm, with notable exceptions in vv. 2 and 7. Colometrical examination reveals a consistent inclination towards the Qinah metre throughout the bicola of this text. This metrical pattern, characteristic of Hebrew lamentations, reaches its apogee in v. 7, which exhibits a prototypical Qinah structure and functions as a closure.

Syllabic analysis reveals a remarkable balance across all verses except for v. 7. This consistency in syllable count per verse, with a single deviation, may serve to highlight the content of the final verse or provide a rhythmic resolution to the psalm.

A comparative assessment with the Syriac version of the psalm indicates that the Hebrew text demonstrates superior balance in both syllabic and colometrical aspects. The Hebrew version exhibits a more consistent range in syllable count within the limits of one verse, suggesting a more structured approach to composition or possibly reflecting the inherent phonological characteristics of Biblical Hebrew. As a whole, the findings showcase that the Syriac text reveals a closer consistency in syllable counts across vv. 4–7 compared to their Hebrew counterpart. This phenomenon suggests that the Syriac translator prioritised maintaining syllabic balance at the verse level rather than within individual cola. In contrast, the Hebrew original demonstrates a predilection for colometrical and syllabic balance within and between cola. This divergence in structural emphasis highlights the distinct poetic strategies employed by the original Hebrew authors and the subsequent Syriac translators, reflecting their respective linguistic and literary conventions.

Strophic analysis of the Hebrew psalm, considering both word and syllable counts, unveils a striking symmetry. The first and third strophes display near-perfect balance, each comprising 21 words and 49 syllables (first strophe) and 22 words and 49 syllables (third strophe). In contrast, the second strophe is markedly shorter, containing 6 words and 14 syllables. This structural arrangement serves to emphasise the content of the central strophe or create a rhythmic pause between the balanced opening and closing sections.²⁹⁹

The range of syllables per colon spans from 5 to 10, while the word count varies from 2 to 5 per colon. The Hebrew text contains 110 syllables and 16 cola, with an average of 6.87 syllables per colon, which is less than the usual number.

This controlled variation allows for flexibility in expression while maintaining overall structural integrity.

Further analysis of consonantal distribution reinforces the observed balance. The first and third strophes contain 77 consonants, with 21 and 22 words, respectively, while the second strophe comprises 24 consonants and 6 words. This consonantal

²⁹⁹ Verse 4 exhibits characteristics of a proverbial statement, likely representing a direct citation. Its strategic placement serves a structural function, effectively bisecting the psalm into two distinct sections. This deliberate incorporation of a proverb at this juncture not only enriches the psalm's content but also functions as a pivotal element in its overall compositional architecture, potentially influencing the thematic development and rhetorical structure of the surrounding verses.

symmetry between the outer strophes, coupled with the brevity of the central strophe, creates a well-defined structural framework for the psalm.

In conclusion, the Hebrew text of Ps 120 demonstrates a high degree of structural sophistication. The balanced distribution of syllables, words, and consonants, particularly evident in the symmetry between the first and third strophes, suggests a carefully crafted composition. This structural precision not only enhances the aesthetic quality of the psalm but also potentially serves to reinforce its thematic development and facilitate its liturgical use.

6. Conclusion

The Syriac translator demonstrates a sophisticated approach to strophic demarcation in Ps 120, employing a multifaceted array of markers to delineate three distinct strophes. These markers encompass thematic unity and shifts, verbal repetition, symmetrical word patterns, alliteration and consonantal patterns, and inclusions formed by repeated sounds or words at strophic boundaries. The translator also utilises comparative proverbs and strong conversive phrases to signal strophic boundaries, while strategically repeating grammatical elements such as the waw copula and prepositions. Coherent lexical series contribute to the internal structure of strophes, and specific consonants are used to interconnect verses within strophes. Integrating semantic, phonetic, and structural elements, this comprehensive approach effectively organises the psalm into cohesive strophic units, enhancing its poetic structure and facilitating deeper textual comprehension.

The study reveals significant similarities between the versions of P-Ps and MT. The Syriac translator is familiar with various poetic features employed by Hebrew scribes, including synonymous parallelism, word repetition, alliteration, and strophic demarcation through specific poetic elements. However, the Syriac translator's application of these features demonstrates a degree of independence. Notably, alliteration emerges as the most prominent poetic quality in the Syriac text, shaping the strophes more intensively than in the Hebrew version. While comparable to the Hebrew text, word repetition is slightly different and less intensive in this psalm.

In pursuit of enhanced precision and transparency, the Syriac translator occasionally modifies the syntactic structure and engages in lexical additions or omissions. The translator recognises colometry, a feature established by the Hebrew authors of Ps 120, either deliberately or inadvertently. Additionally, the Syriac version introduces syllable counting as a basis for the ideal metre, a feature present in the Hebrew original. The structural analysis of Ps 120 in Syriac reveals strophes with varying numbers of cola and a heterosyllabic metrical pattern.

A detailed examination of the syllabic structure provides further insights into the compositional differences between the Syriac and Hebrew versions. The Syriac text yields an average of 6.78 syllables per colon, and in comparison, the Hebrew text has an average of 6.87 syllables per colon.

Although the discovery indicates that the metrical patterns and strophic structures are not entirely compatible with those found in classical Syriac poetry, they share features such as word repetition, thematic coherence, parallelism, and occasional rhythmic and isosyllabic patterns. These similarities suggest a likely connection between the structure of P-Ps and characteristics found in classical Syriac poetry.

CHAPTER EIGHT: PSALM 124

1. General information

Psalm 124 seems to be a psalm of thanksgiving for the community. It would be a rare occurrence in biblical literature if this is the case.³⁰⁰ This is why Crüsemann argues that the language used in this psalm reflects individual compositions and displays no evidence of cultic usage in communities.³⁰¹ This psalm has traditionally been attributed to David, according to its title and the particular situation in David's life when he defeated the Ammonites (2 Sam 10). Nevertheless, some scholars already in the 18th century advocated the hypothesis that this psalm originated during the Babylonian period, which could be the background of v. 7 of the psalm.³⁰²

Nowadays, the psalm is considered to be of even younger date than the Babylonian period. According to Seybold, the psalm appears to be an emendation of individual texts to make them relevant to the Israelite community.³⁰³ As Ps 124 demonstrates strong and important poetic features such as repeated wording, it is easy to envision it being sung liturgically in the communities of worshippers. With regard to the repeated word “if not” (לֹא־יִלְוֶי) followed by the adverb “then” (אֲזַי) in the following verses, the poetic repetition of the word is particularly effective. The application of metaphors, such as water, devouring sea monsters, and a fowler's trap, supports Clifford's definition of “swiftness and drama.”³⁰⁴ For such reasons, this psalm is perfect for a poetic analysis.

2. The text and strophic structure

2.1. The Syriac text

The following is the text of Ps 124 according to the Leiden edition and its translation into English.³⁰⁵ The Roman numbers refer to the strophes, which are discussed below.

- | | | | |
|---|----|--|----------------------------------|
| I | 1a | If the Lord had not stood up for us, | ܐܠܗ ܠܗ ܚܝܬ ܕܡܪ ܠܗ. |
| | b | may Israel say, if the Lord had not stood up for us. | ܠܚܝܬ ܕܝܫܪܐܝܝܠ ܐܠܗ ܠܗ ܚܝܬ ܕܡܪ ܠܗ. |

³⁰⁰ Allen 2002, 219.

³⁰¹ Crüsemann 1969, 160–168; Allen 2002, 219.

³⁰² Dimock 1791, 292.

³⁰³ Seybold 1978, 27.

³⁰⁴ DeClaissé-Walford et al. 2014, 909.

³⁰⁵ The English translation is according to Taylor et al. (2020) but have been modified occasionally.

II	2	When human beings stood against us;	חַד מַחֲנֵה חַיִּים חֲסִידָם.
	3a	they would have swallowed us alive,	שֶׁחַד חֲלָבִים מָחֵה לֵב.
	b	when their anger burned against us.	וְחַד אֲרֻסָּתָם אֵי זֶה בִּלְעָם חֲלָבִים.
III	4a	They would have drowned us in the waters,	חֲסִידָם חֲלָבִים מָחֵה לֵב.
	b	the torrent would have passed over us,	כִּי יִלְחָח חֲסִידָם חֲלָבִים.
	5	and many waters would have crossed over us.	וְחֲסִידָם חֲלָבִים מָחֵה לֵב.
IV	6	Blessed is the Lord, who did not give us as food for their teeth.	בְּרִכָּה לַיהוָה חֲסִידָם חֲלָבִים מָחֵה לֵב. לְעַמּוּסָם.
	7a	We were delivered like a bird from the snare of the hunter,	נִפְתָּרָנוּ כִּי חֲסִידָם חֲלָבִים מָחֵה לֵב. חֲסִידָם חֲלָבִים מָחֵה לֵב.
	b	the snare was broken, and we escaped.	חֲסִידָם חֲלָבִים מָחֵה לֵב.
	8a	Our help is in the name of the Lord,	וְחֲסִידָם חֲלָבִים מָחֵה לֵב.
	b	who made the heavens and the earth.	וְחֲסִידָם חֲלָבִים מָחֵה לֵב.

The psalm is divided into four distinct strophes: vv. 1, 2–3, 4–5 and 6–8, each demarcated by specific linguistic and semantic features.

The initial strophe in v. 1 is distinguished by the repetition of the phrase **חֲסִידָם חֲלָבִים** in cola 1a and 1b, accompanied by a prominent **ח**-alliteration resulting from this repetition. Further emphasising this strophe is a quadruple **ח**-alliteration in the words **חֲסִידָם** (appearing twice), **חֲסִידָם** and **חֲסִידָם**. This phonetic patterning serves to demarcate the opening strophe aurally.

Verses 2–3 constitute the second strophe, characterised by an inclusion formed by the use of **ח** and **חֲסִידָם**. The temporal conjunction **ח** functions as a demarcation element, signalling both structural transition and thematic progression from divine protection to anthropogenic hostility.

The third strophe, encompassing vv. 4–5, is unified through lexical repetition and thematic coherence. Key terms such as **חֲסִידָם** (repeated in vv. 4a and 5), **חֲסִידָם** (in vv. 4b and 5), and **חֲסִידָם** (in vv. 4b and 5) create internal connections. An inclusion formed by **חֲסִידָם** in cola 4a and 5 further punctuates the strophe. The passage demonstrates cohesive thematic unity through its aquatic disaster motifs, with synonymous parallelism reinforcing the catastrophic flood imagery.

The final strophe in vv. 6–8 is demarcated by several features. Primarily, a thematic and semantic shift occurs, accompanied by the repetition of **חֲסִידָם** in vv. 6 and 8a. The strophe is further unified by a coherent lexical series, including words related to consumption **חֲסִידָם** ‘food’, **חֲסִידָם** ‘teeth’ in v. 6 and hunting imagery **חֲסִידָם** ‘bird’, **חֲסִידָם** ‘escape’, **חֲסִידָם** ‘snare’, **חֲסִידָם** ‘hunter’, **חֲסִידָם** ‘deliver’ in v. 7. The inclusion of the word pair **חֲסִידָם חֲסִידָם** ‘heavens and earth’ in v. 8 provides a cosmic dimension to the strophe’s conclusion.

The structural composition of Ps 124 exhibits variability in colon distribution across strophes. The second and third strophes contain three cola each, while the first strophe comprises two cola, and the final strophe expands to five cola.

2.2. The Hebrew text

The Hebrew MT text of Ps 124 and its English translation are the following:³⁰⁶

I	1a ³⁰⁷	If Yhwh had not been on our side,	לולי יהוה שהיה לנו
	b	let Israel now say:	יאמרנא ישראל
	2a	Had it not been Yhwh who was on our side,	לולי יהוה שהיה לנו
	b	when men rose up against us.	בקום עלינו אדם
II	3a	Then, they would have swallowed us alive,	אזי חיים בלעונו
	b	when their anger was kindled against us;	בחרות אפם בנו
	4a	then, the waters had overflowed us,	אזי המים שטפנונו
	b	the stream passed over our soul;	נחלה עבר על־נפשנו
	5a	then passed over on our soul	אזי עבר על־נפשנו
	b	the proud waters.	המים הזידונים
III	6a	Blessed be Yhwh,	ברוך יהוה
	b	who has not given us	שלא נתננו
	c	as prey to their teeth.	טרף לשניהם
	7a	Our soul escaped as a bird	נפשנו כצפור נמלטה
	b	out of the snare of the fowlers,	מפח יוקשים
	c	the snare is broken,	הפח נשבר
	d	and we have escaped.	ואנחנו נמלטנו
	8a	Our help is in the name of Yhwh,	עזרנו בשם יהוה
	b	the maker of heaven and earth.	עשה שמים וארץ

The psalm is structured into three distinct strophes: vv. 1–2, 3–5 and 6–8, each characterised by specific linguistic and thematic features.³⁰⁸

From a text-critical perspective, there are no significant variations that substantially impact the poetic structure of the psalm. The tripartite strophic division is supported by several compelling arguments based on lexical repetition, thematic shifts and syntactic patterns.

The initial strophe, encompassing vv. 1–2, is demarcated by the repetition of the phrase 'לולי יהוה שהיה לנו' 'if Yhwh had not been with us', creating a parallel structure

³⁰⁶ Regarding the English translation of the Hebrew text, I acknowledge the assistance of Bible.org, with the ESV, LSB, and NABRE being particularly helpful for my work.

³⁰⁷ Levin (2016, 385) is of the opinion that the first verse is secondary. Besides, Crüsemann (1969, 167) believes that "[t]his phrase is no part of the psalm itself."

³⁰⁸ Van der Lugt (2014, 368) marks off Ps 124 into vv. 1–3, 4–6, 7–8; Fokkelman (2003, 274–276) vv. 1–2, 3–5, 6–7, 8; Terrien (2003, 819, 820) vv. 1–2, 3–5, 6–8; Seybold (1996, 483) vv. 1–4, 5–7, 8.

A few examples of strophic structure are also presented here according to Van der Lugt (2014, 368): Briggs and Briggs (1906–1907) vv. 1–4, 6–8; Kissane (1954) vv. 1, 2–5, 6–8.

between cola 1a and 2a. This repetition serves as a framing device, establishing the thematic foundation of the psalm.

The second strophe in vv. 3–5 is characterised by multiple structural elements. The adverb **אזי** ‘then’ functions as a keyword and transitional marker, appearing at the beginning of cola 3a, 4a and 5a. This repetition creates a rhythmic pattern that underscores the strophic unity. Additionally, the recurrence of specific lexical items, namely **נפשנו** ‘our soul’ in vv. 4b and 5a, and **המים** ‘water’ in vv. 4a and 5b, reinforces the internal cohesion of the strophe. A notable feature is the consistent end-rhyme created by the suffix **נו**- at the conclusion of each colon within this strophe, with the exception of the final colon. This deviation in the rhyme scheme of the last colon may serve to emphasise the strophe’s conclusion. Furthermore, the verses within this strophe exhibit strong thematic and semantic coherence, portraying catastrophe through flood imagery.

The third strophe, encompassing vv. 6–8, is initiated by the phrase **ברוך יהוה** ‘blessed be Yhwh’, which marks a thematic shift, portraying God as Savior and Helper. This strophe is further unified by a coherent lexical series, including terms such as **טרף** ‘prey’ and **שני** ‘teeth’ in v. 6, and **צפור** ‘bird’, **פח** ‘snare’, and **יוקשים** ‘bird catcher’ in v. 7. The inclusion of the word pair **שמים וארץ** ‘heaven and earth’ provides an additional indicator of strophic structure. The strophe is further emphasised by the strategic placement of key phrases **ברוך יהוה**, **נפשנו** and **עזרנו** at the beginnings of vv. 6, 7 and 8, respectively, which serve to interconnect these verses.

A holistic examination of Ps 124 reveals a consistent pattern of initiating each verse with significant words or phrases: **לולי יהוה**, **אזי**, **ברוך יהוה**, **נפשנו** and **עזרנו** at the commencement of all verses. This structural feature contributes to the clear demarcation of strophes and enhances the overall poetic cohesion of the psalm.³⁰⁹

3. Word repetition and sound figures

The survey emphasises the general impression that the Syriac translator tends to follow the Hebrew word order. Therefore, **אִם לֹא הָיָה עֲזָרָה לָנוּ** ‘if the Lord had not stood up for us’ in v. 1 renders **לולי יהוה שהיה לנו**, the root verb **עמד** ‘stand’ in vv. 1a, 1b and 2 **שהיה** and **קום**, **יהוה** in vv. 1a, 1b, 6 and 8a **יהוה**, **כֵּן** ‘when’ in vv. 2

³⁰⁹ Van der Lugt (2014, 346) delineates strophes through repetition, alliteration, and structural patterns such as chiasmus, apodosis, and protasis. Terrien (2003, 820–821) proposes a three-strophe structure for Ps 124, based on keywords and thematic shifts, noting distinct metrical patterns: Strophe I (2+2+2, 2+2+2), Strophe II (3+3, 3+3, 3+3), and Strophe III (2+2+2, 3+2, 3+3). According to Fokkelman’s analysis (2003, 274–276), the strophic markers in Ps 124 are primarily distinguished through shifting anaphoric patterns: a single repetition forming the strophe (vv. 1–2) followed by a double repetition of **אזי** creating the strophe (vv. 3–5). This division is reinforced by syntactic structure (protasis to apodosis), the position of v. 1b as an external quotation formula, and the thematic progression from danger’s identification to its description, all while maintaining cohesion through a single periodic sentence.

and 3b ב, ל 'for us, us' in vv. 1a, 1b, 3a and 4a לנו and the suffix חלץ, -נו 'against us' in vv. 2 and 3b עלינו and בנו, חס 'waters' in vv. 4a and 5 (also forms inclusion) המים, עבר על-נפשנו 'passed over our soul' in vv. 4b and 5 נפשנו, חס 'snare' in vv. 7a and 7b פח. It is noticeable that the Syriac text shows more tendency in word repetition using a single verb מס in vv. 1a, 1b and 2, while the Hebrew text uses different verbs היה and קום. Likewise, the Syriac translator once again shows his tendency to use the same word to highlight the word repetition when he uses חלץ in vv. 2 and 3b, while its Hebrew counterpart uses עלינו and בנו.³¹⁰ It is noteworthy that in vv. 3a, 4a and 5, the word אזי 'then' is repeated in the Hebrew text, while the Syriac translator ignores it and uses no equivalents for it. Similarly, in vv. 7a and 7d, the single word נמלטה 'escape' is repeated in Hebrew, while the Syriac translator would rather use two different words ܐܬܬܬܬܠܬ and ܐܬܬܬܬܠܬ. The use of the words לנו, עלינו, בלעונו, בנו, שטפנו, נפשנו in cola 1a, 1b, 2b, 3a, 3b, 4a, 4b and 5 form a harmonic structure and an end rhyme in the Hebrew text, which is conspicuous in the first and second strophes.

Although the Syriac translator occasionally replaces various Hebrew terms with a single Syriac word, this should not be viewed as indicating a limited vocabulary in Syriac literature. The repetition of words functions similarly in both the Syriac and Hebrew texts, serving to emphasise distinct strophes. Notably, in the first and second strophes, word repetition acts as a more prominent strophic marker compared to the third.

The following table presents the frequency of word repetition in both the Hebrew and Syriac texts.

Hebrew text	Syriac text
לולי יהוה שהיה לנו (1a, 2a)	ܠܠܝܐ ܠܗ ܝܗܘܐ ܕܡܪܝܢ (1a, 1b)
	ܡܫܬ (2)
יהוה (1a, 2a, 6a, 8a)	ܝܗܘܐ (1a, 1b, 6, 8a)
	ܠ (3a, 4a)
	ܚܕ (2, 3b)
אזי (3a, 4a, 5a)	
	ܡܫܬ (2, 3b)
המים (4a, 5b)	ܡܫܬ (4a, 5)
עבר על-נפשנו (4b, 5a)	ܥܒܪ ܥܠ-ܢܦܫܐ (4b, 5)
נפשנו (7a)	ܢܦܫܐ (7a)
פח (7a, 7b)	ܦܚ (7a, 7b)
נמלטה (7a, 7d)	
55 words and 18 repetitions of 8 words	58 words and 20 repetitions of 10 words

³¹⁰ As another possibility, it may simply be a result of the use of Syriac idioms.

The comparative analysis of lexical distribution reveals that the Syriac textual corpus demonstrates a higher incidence of lexical recursion compared to its Hebrew counterpart. However, this observation shows the quantitative lexical density, wherein the Hebrew text maintains a more economical word-to-content ratio.

As regards sound figures and especially alliteration, ܐ and ܕ form alliteration in cola 1a and 1b (ܐܕܐ), in 1b (ܐܕܐ, ܕܐܕܐ), in 2 and 3b (ܕܐ), in 3b (ܐܕܐܐܐܐ). Moreover, the consonant ܕ with elevenfold repetition within the first strophe emphasises the predominant sound. The consonants ܡ and ܢ in cola 1a, 1b and ܐ in cola 1a (ܐܕܐ) and 1b (ܐܕܐ, ܕܐܕܐ, ܐܕܐ) add more colour to the alliteration of the first strophe. It is worth noting that ܠ also seems to be the dominant sound in the first strophe of the Hebrew text. However, it does not contest the Syriac version at all. In the second strophe, in cola 2 (ܕܐ, ܕܐ) and 3b (ܕܐ), ܡ and ܢ build a small alliterative structure. The consonant ܡ in cola 4a and 5 (ܡܐ) and in 4a (ܡܐܐܐܐ), together with ܐ and ܕ forms an alliteration and indicates that the second strophe is not as remarkable as the first strophe. A small alliteration of ܐ, ܕ and ܕ occurs in the second strophe of the Hebrew text; however, it is insignificant, just as it is in the first strophe of the Syriac translation. The fourfold ܐ-alliteration in cola 7a (ܐܐܐܐ), 7a and 7b (ܐܐ) and 7b (ܐܐ), along with the fourfold ܡ-alliteration in cola 6 and 8a (ܡܐ), 6a (ܡܐܐܐܐ) and 7a (ܡܐ) build up alliteration in the third strophe. In addition, ܐ and ܕ highlight the strophe with the sevenfold frequency.

Moreover, the consonant ܝ in 7a, in the words ܐܐܐܐ and ܐܐܐܐ forms a small alliteration. In the third strophe of the Hebrew text, the fivefold ܕ-alliteration in cola 6 (ܕܕܕܕܕ), 7a (ܕܕܕܕܕ), 7c (ܕܕܕܕܕ) and 7d (ܕܕܕܕܕ) and the fourfold ܐ/ܕ alliteration in cola 7d (ܐܐܐܐ), 8a (ܐܐܐܐ) and 8b (ܐܐܐܐ) underline the soundscape. In addition, the frequency of the consonant ܐ forms the predominant sound in the third strophe with the frequency of seven times. It is notable that the consonant ܕ occurs in the third strophe of the Syriac text, but not as frequently as in Hebrew.

A comprehensive examination of the Hebrew and Syriac versions of Ps 124 reveals the sophisticated utilisation of phonetic devices, including word repetition and alliteration, crucial in delineating the strophic structure. The analysis demonstrates a comparable distribution of alliterative patterns across both versions, though subtle variations are observed within individual strophes.

In the Syriac rendition, the investigation uncovers a distinct phonetic progression across the psalm's strophic divisions. The initial strophe is characterised by the prevalence of the consonant ܕ, which serves as the dominant sound. This phonetic emphasis shifts in the subsequent strophes, with the consonants ܐ and ܕ emerging as the primary sound in the third and fourth strophes, respectively.

Contrastingly, the Hebrew text exhibits a different alliterative pattern, particularly notable in the third strophe, where the consonant ܐ assumes prominence as the dominant sound. This divergence in consonantal emphasis between the Hebrew original and its Syriac translation provides insight into the phonetic adaptations necessitated by the inherent phonological differences between the two Semitic languages.

4. Parallelism and syntax in the Syriac psalm

From a parallelistic perspective, it is noteworthy that only v. 4 maintains synonymous parallelism in both the Hebrew and Syriac versions. This consistency suggests a deliberate effort by the Syriac translator to preserve this particular poetic feature, potentially due to its thematic or structural importance within the psalm.

Verse 7 presents an intriguing divergence between the two versions. In the Syriac text, this verse is rendered as a bicolon, exhibiting parallelism, a feature absent in the Hebrew original due to its different versification. This structural modification in the Syriac version may represent an interpretative choice by the translator, possibly aimed at enhancing the poetic quality or clarifying the verse's meaning.

Furthermore, the Syriac rendition of v. 7 demonstrates a semantic chiasmus, a sophisticated poetic device not present in the Hebrew counterpart: cf. the position of the keywords ܦܬܝܠܐ ‘snare’ and the verbs for escaping and the notions for “us” (ܡܝܢܢܐ, ܡܝܢܢܐ). This addition of a chiastic structure in the Syriac text exemplifies the translator’s creative engagement with the source material.

Generally, the Syriac translation adheres closely to the Hebrew word order, indicating respect for the original text's structure. However, deviations from this pattern are observed when the translator either omits or adds specific elements or alters the syntactic structure. These modifications appear to be motivated by a desire to enhance the comprehensibility of the text for the target audience, suggesting a balance between fidelity to the original and accessibility for Syriac readers.

5. Quantitative poetic analysis

This table provides the metrical analysis for the Syriac psalm according to the Leiden edition by counting both syllables and words separately.

Strophes	Verses	Words	Words in verses	Syllables	Syllables in verses	Colometry	Transliteration	Arabic
I	1a	5	12	7	19	14	'el/lu/ lā/ mār/yā/ ḡqām/ lan/	أله له خير دمر له.
	b	7		12		25	nē/mar/'is/rā/yēl/d'el/lu/lā/mār/ yā/ḡqām/lan	نعم خير دمر له الله له خير دمر له
II	2	4	4	6	6	15	kaḡ/qām/'layn/bnay/nā/šā	حد محله علم حسمه.
	3a	4	8	6	13	13	Ḥay/yaṭ/ bāl/'in/waw/lan	سبح طبعهم له.
	b	4		7		19	wkaḡd' eṭ/ḥam/maṭ/ruyz/hon/ 'layn	حد كحسمه في حسمه علم.

III	4a	4	8	6	14	15	<i>Bmay/yā/mṭab/'in/waw/lan</i>	ܒܡܝܝܬܝܡܬܒܝܢܘܘܠܐܢ
	b	4		8		16	<i>'ar/yel/tā/'eb/raṭ/'al/naṣ/šan</i>	ܐܪܝܠܬܐܒܪܬܐܠܢܐܨܫܢ
	5	5	5	9	9	19	<i>Wmay/yā/sag/gi/'ē/'ḥar/'al/ naṣ/šan</i>	ܘܡܝܝܬܐܨܝܓܝܐܗܪܐܠܢܐܨܫܢ
IV	6	7	7	13	13	31	<i>Bri/ku/mār/yā/dlā/ya/ḥan/</i>	ܒܪܝܟܘܡܪܝܐܕܠܐܝܚܢ
							<i>mē/ḵul/tā/ lšen/nay/hon</i>	ܡܝܚܠܬܐܠܫܢܢܝܚܢ
	7a	7	11	14	23	27	<i>naṣ/šan/'ak/ṣef/rā/et/pal/ṭat/men/</i>	ܢܐܨܫܢܐܚܨܝܫܪܐܝܬܦܠܬܬܡܢ
							<i>pah/ḥā/dṣay/yā/dā</i>	ܦܚܚܐܕܨܝܝܐܕܐ
	b	4		9		18	<i>pah/ḥā/'ett/ḥar/wah/nan/</i>	ܦܚܚܐܗܬܚܪܘܗܢܢ
							<i>'et/paṣ/ṣēn</i>	ܐܬܦܥܨܝܢ
	8a	3	7	7	14	16	<i>W'ud/rā/nan/baš/mēh/dmār/yā</i>	ܘܘܕܪܐܢܢܒܫܡܝܚܕܡܪܝܐ
	b	4		7		15	<i>haw/da/'ḥaḍ/šmay/yā/war/'ā</i>	ܚܘܕܐܚܕܫܡܝܝܐܘܪܐ

The versification analysis of Ps 124 in the Syriac text reveals a structural composition comprising three bicola in vv. 1, 7, and 8, a monocolon in v. 6, and two tricola in vv. 2–3 and 4–5.

The first strophe consists of a single bicolon in v. 1, characterised by a syllable and word distribution of 19:12. The second strophe exhibits an intricate structure, featuring a tricolon in vv. 2–3 with a 19:12 syllable and word arrangement, preceded by a tricolon in the third strophe, presenting vv. 4–5 with a distribution of 13 words and 23 syllables. The fourth strophe encompasses two bicola in vv. 7 and 8, with syllable and word arrangements of 23:14 and 11:7, respectively, interspersed with a monocolon in v. 6 containing 13 syllables and 7 words.

The structural composition of vv. 1–5 exhibits a remarkable symmetrical distribution, forming three segments with 12, 12, and 13 words, respectively, accompanied by a corresponding syllabic pattern of 19, 19, and 23 syllables. Notably, the first and second strophes prove a nice balance in terms of syllable and word distribution. Additionally, v. 8 within the fourth strophe shows a balanced ratio of words and syllables.

Based on the number of syllables, words and consonants in each strophe, the following results are tabulated:

Strophes	Verses	Syllables	Words	Colometry
I	1	19	12	39
II	2–3	19	12	47
III	4–5	23	13	50
IV	6–8	50	25	107

The examination of word, syllable and consonant counts yields several noteworthy observations:

The first and second strophes exhibit perfect balance in terms of both word and syllable counts, demonstrating a meticulous approach to poetic structure. This balance extends to the third strophe when considering word count alone, suggesting a

deliberate compositional strategy that maintains equilibrium across the initial three strophes of the psalm.

The psalm's syllabic structure displays a range of 6–14 syllables per colon, while the word count varies from 3 to 7 words per colon. In its entirety, Ps 124 comprises 111 syllables distributed across 13 cola, resulting in an average of 8.53 syllables per colon.

Despite the balanced nature of word and syllable counts in certain strophes, a colometrical analysis reveals that no strophe achieves complete equilibrium in length. However, vv. 4 and 8 present notable exceptions, demonstrating near-perfect balance with length ratios of 16:15 and 15:16, respectively. This suggests that while the overall strophic balance may not have been a primary concern, individual verses were crafted with attention to colometrical symmetry.

Consistent with other psalms examined in this study, Ps 124 exhibits strophes containing varying numbers of cola. This structural feature, combined with its heterosyllabic metrical pattern, underscores the complex and diverse nature of Hebrew poetic composition as reflected in the Syriac translation.

Now, we get started with the Hebrew text. A table illustrates the number of syllables and words in each colon and verse. The colometrical results are also presented.

Strophes	Verses	Words	Words in verses	Syllables	Syllables in verses	Colometry		
I	1a	4	7	9	15	15	לולי יהוה שהיה לנו	לולי יהוה שהיה לנו
	b	3		6		11	יאמרנא ישראל	יאמרנא ישראל
	2a	4	7	9	16	15	לולי יהוה שהיה לנו	לולי יהוה שהיה לנו
	b	3		7		12	בקום עלינו אדם	בקום עלינו אדם
II	3a	3	6	8	15	13	אזי חיים בלעונו	אזי חיים בלעונו
	b	3		7		11	בחרות אפס בנו	בחרות אפס בנו
	4a	3	7	9	17	13	אזי המים שטפנו	אזי המים שטפנו
	b	4		8		14	נחלה עבר על־נפשנו	נחלה עבר על־נפשנו
	5a	4	6	8	15	13	אזי עבר על־נפשנו	אזי עבר על־נפשנו
	b	2		7		12	המים הזידונים	המים הזידונים
III	6a	2	6	4	16	8	ברוך יהוה	ברוך יהוה
	b	2		6		8	שלא נתננו	שלא נתננו
	c	2		6		9	טרף לשניהם	טרף לשניהם

7a	3	9	9	26	15	נפ/ש/נו/כ/צפ/פור/נמ/ל/טה	נפשנו כצפור נמלטה
b	2		5		9	מפ/פח/יו/ק/שים	מפח יוקשים
c	2		4		7	הפ/פח/נש/בר	הפח נשבר
d	2		8		12	ו/א/נח/נו/נמ/ל/ט/נו	ואנחנו נמלטנו
8a	3	6	7	15	12	עז/ר/נו/ב/שם/יה/וה	עזרנו בשם יהוה
b	3		8		11	ע/שה/ש/מ/ים/ו/א/רץ	עשה שמים וארץ

The Hebrew text of Ps 124 consists of 19 cola,³¹¹ revealing a complex structure with varying degrees of balance across different metrical aspects. This examination provides valuable insights into the compositional techniques employed in Hebrew biblical poetry.

The colometrical analysis demonstrates a generally balanced ratio throughout the psalm, with notable exceptions in vv. 1 and 7, where the difference between cola exceeds 3 consonants. This pattern suggests a deliberate structural approach, with most verses adhering to a relatively consistent colometrical balance. Furthermore, all verses except v. 7 exhibit balance in syllable count, indicating a conscious effort to maintain rhythmic consistency across the majority of the psalm.

A comparative analysis between the Hebrew and Syriac texts reveals similar syllabic patterns, suggesting a degree of fidelity in the translation process. However, the Hebrew text demonstrates superior colometrical balance compared to its Syriac counterpart, highlighting potential challenges in maintaining precise structural elements during translation.

The strophic analysis of the Hebrew psalm yields the following quantitative data: first strophe: 14 words, 31 syllables; second strophe: 19 words, 47 syllables; third strophe: 21 words, 57 syllables. This distribution indicates a lack of consistent correlation between strophes, with the only notable balance occurring in word count between the second and third strophes. The psalm's overall structure comprises 135 syllables across 19 cola, resulting in an average of 7.10 syllables per colon. Individual cola contain 4–9 syllables and 2–4 words, demonstrating a range of metrical variation within the psalm.

Examination of consonant and word distribution further elucidates the psalm's structure: first strophe: 14 words, 53 consonants; second strophe: 19 words, 76 consonants; third strophe: 21 words, 91 consonants. This analysis reaffirms the balanced word count between the second and third strophes but reveals no other significant correlations across strophes.

Notably, the second strophe exhibits remarkable symmetry and balance in both consonant length (13:11, 13:14, 13:12) and syllable count (8:7, 9:8, 8:7). Similar, though less pronounced, symmetrical features are observed in the first strophe, with consonant counts of 15:11, 15:12 and syllable counts of 9:6, 9:7. While not achieving

³¹¹ Van der Lugt (2014, 368) quotes Fokkelman who considers 18 cola; Weber (2003) considers v. 6 as a tricolon, and Stocks (2012, 102–109) as a 'para-tricolon'.

perfect balance in syllable and consonant counts, the symmetrical patterns in colometrical and syllabic ratios distinguish these two strophes.

This comprehensive analysis of the Hebrew Ps 124 reveals a sophisticated interplay of various metrical elements. The observed patterns of balance, symmetry and variation across different structural levels (cola, verses and strophes) underscore the complex nature of Hebrew biblical poetry.

6. Conclusion

The Syriac translation of Ps 124 exhibits a sophisticated application of diverse strophic markers, reflecting the translator's nuanced approach to preserving and adapting the poetic structure of the Hebrew original. This translation methodology employs a multifaceted system of textual demarcation, utilising both phonetic and semantic elements to delineate strophic boundaries.

Primarily, the translator employs consonantal alliteration as a key phonetic marker, strategically emphasising specific consonants within different strophes to create auditory cohesion and distinction.

Word repetition emerges as another significant strophic marker, with key terms strategically reiterated at crucial junctures to signal transitions between strophic units. This repetition often functions in tandem with inclusion, a literary device where similar words or phrases bookend a strophic section, effectively encapsulating its thematic content.

Thematic shifts within the psalm are carefully leveraged to indicate strophic divisions, with distinct changes in subject matter or perspective serving as natural breakpoints in the text's structure. These thematic transitions are often reinforced by deploying coherent lexical word pairs, which provide semantic links within strophes while distinguishing them from adjacent textual units.

This intricate interplay of phonetic, semantic and structural elements demonstrates the Syriac translator's adept handling of the source material. By employing this diverse array of strophic markers, the translator succeeds in preserving the psalm's poetic integrity while adapting it to the linguistic and literary conventions of the Syriac language. This approach not only maintains the structural coherence of the original Hebrew but also enhances the text's accessibility and aesthetic appeal for its target audience, showcasing the sophisticated nature of ancient biblical translation practices.

The investigation demonstrates that the Syriac version closely adheres to MT in many respects, with only minor divergences in versification.

The Syriac translator exhibits a profound understanding of the poetic devices employed in the Hebrew original, including synonymous parallelism, word repetition, alliteration, and the use of specific poetic elements as strophic markers. However, the translator's approach to these devices is distinctively nuanced, reflecting the unique challenges and opportunities presented by the translation process.

Based on comparative linguistic analysis, the Syriac textual corpus demonstrates a higher frequency of lexical recursion than its Hebrew counterpart, notwithstanding that the Hebrew text maintains a more economical word-to-content ratio in terms of overall lexical density.

Alliteration in the Syriac psalm demonstrates a slightly more extensive distribution range than in Hebrew, although the specific alliterative patterns differ between strophes. This variation suggests that the translator recognised the importance of alliteration as a poetic device and sought to recreate its effect, albeit with adaptations suited to the Syriac language.

The Syriac translation also exhibits selective additions, omissions, and syntactic alterations. These modifications appear to be motivated by a desire to enhance the text's intelligibility and clarity for the target audience, illustrating the translator's commitment to both accurate representation and effective communication.

Metrically, the Syriac text favours syllable count, contrasting with the colometrical approach prevalent in the Hebrew original. This shift results in more evenly balanced verses in terms of syllable count in the Syriac version, as opposed to the colometrically balanced verses of the Hebrew text. Despite this general trend, instances of balanced colometrical length in the Syriac text suggest some recognition or preservation of Hebrew colometrical principles, though the extent of this recognition remains uncertain.

A quantitative analysis reveals that the Syriac Ps 124 yields an average of 8.53 syllables per colon. In contrast, the Hebrew psalm's structure results in an average of 7.10 syllables per colon. This disparity in syllable distribution and cola count underscores the structural adaptations made in the translation process.

Although the discovery indicates that the metrical patterns and strophic structures are not entirely compatible with those found in classical Syriac poetry, they share features such as word repetition, thematic coherence, parallelism and occasional rhythmic and isosyllabic patterns. These similarities suggest a likely connection between the structure of P-Ps and characteristics found in classical Syriac poetry. The psalm exhibits a heterosyllabic metrical pattern, with strophes varying in their number of cola.

CHAPTER NINE: PSALM 146

1. General information

As all Psalms 146–150 begin and end with the phrase “Hallelujah” in Hebrew, Ps 146 is considered one of the “Hallelujah psalms”. Psalm 146 is an individual hymn sung mainly in the third person.³¹² The structure of the psalm reveals the frequent application of imperative calls to praise Yahweh’s work in creation and history.³¹³ The psalm can be divided into two equal parts that show two different perspectives. The first section in vv. 1–5 demonstrates how happy man can be when he trusts in God and not in a human, and the second section in vv. 6–10 names the reasons for praise based on divine majesty and deeds.

While discussing the use of hymnic participles in wisdom literature, some scholars, such as Reindl, concluded that wisdom literature strongly impacted Ps 146. However, it is not convincing to consider the whole psalm a wisdom psalm.³¹⁴ The text and language of Ps 146 do not give any historical clues, so it is hard to determine its exact date. The psalm does not show a particular cultic reality nor a definitive legal stance.³¹⁵ However, scholars mainly ascribe the psalm to the second temple period. For instance, Kselman draws on Aramaisms עשתנתי in v. 4 and שברו in v. 5, and “instances of late Hebrew,” such as זקף in v. 8, and maintains a postexilic date.³¹⁶

2. The text and strophic structure

2.1. The Syriac text

The text of Ps 146, according to the Leiden edition and its translation into English, is the following.³¹⁷ The Roman numbers refer to strophes, which will be explained below.³¹⁸

³¹² Crüsemann 1969, 298–301.

³¹³ Westermann 1981, 122–128.

³¹⁴ Reindl 1981, 116–135; Allen 2002, 376.

³¹⁵ Terrien 2003, 910; Seybold 1996, 536.

³¹⁶ Kselman 1988, 589.

³¹⁷ The English translation is according to Taylor et al. (2020) but has been modified occasionally.

³¹⁸ The versification methodology employed in vv. 7–9 diverges from the conventional Leiden edition’s approach. While the Leiden edition’s verse demarcation does not precisely correspond to the natural syntactical boundaries of the Syriac clauses, this analysis implements a modified numerical system that more accurately reflects the inherent clause structure of the Syriac text.

- I 1a Praise the Lord, my soul.³¹⁹ .ܥܒܕܬܐ ܢܦܫܐ ܠܕܢܐ.
 2a I will praise the Lord throughout my life, .ܕܥܒܕܬܐ ܠܕܢܐ ܕܡܫܝܚ.
 b and I will sing to my God as long as I live. .ܕܡܫܝܚ ܕܠܕܢܐ, ܫܝܪܐ ܕܡܫܝܚ ܕܢܐ.
- II 3a Do not place your trust in a ruler and in a human being, .ܠܐ ܬܬܝܬܝܬܐ ܕܬܪܥܬܐ ܕܡܠܟܐ ܕܢܐ.
 b there is no salvation within his power. .ܕܠܐ ܕܡܫܝܚ ܕܢܐ.
 4a For his spirit departs and returns to his ground, .ܕܢܦܫܐ ܕܡܫܝܚ ܕܢܐ ܕܡܫܝܚ.
 b and on that day all his thoughts perish. .ܕܡܫܝܚ ܕܢܐ ܕܡܫܝܚ ܕܢܐ.
- III 5a Blessed is the one whose helper is the God of Jacob, .ܒܠܝܝܬܐ ܕܡܫܝܚ ܕܡܫܝܚ ܕܢܐ.
 b and his hope is in the Lord God; .ܕܡܫܝܚ ܕܢܐ ܕܡܫܝܚ.
 6a who made the heavens and the earth, .ܕܡܫܝܚ ܕܢܐ ܕܡܫܝܚ.
 b and the seas and all that is in them. .ܕܡܫܝܚ ܕܢܐ ܕܡܫܝܚ ܕܢܐ.
- IV 6c He keeps truth forever, .ܕܡܫܝܚ ܕܢܐ ܕܡܫܝܚ.
 7a and he carries out justice for the oppressed. .ܕܡܫܝܚ ܕܢܐ ܕܡܫܝܚ.
- V 7b The Lord gives food to the hungry, .ܕܡܫܝܚ ܕܢܐ ܕܡܫܝܚ.
 c the Lord releases the prisoners, .ܕܡܫܝܚ ܕܢܐ ܕܡܫܝܚ.
 8a the Lord opens the eyes of the blind, .ܕܡܫܝܚ ܕܢܐ ܕܡܫܝܚ.
 b the Lord lifts up those who are bowed over, .ܕܡܫܝܚ ܕܢܐ ܕܡܫܝܚ.
 c the Lord loves the righteous. .ܕܡܫܝܚ ܕܢܐ ܕܡܫܝܚ.
- VI 9a And He watches out the poor, .ܕܡܫܝܚ ܕܢܐ ܕܡܫܝܚ.
 b He nourishes orphans and widows, .ܕܡܫܝܚ ܕܢܐ ܕܡܫܝܚ.
 c and He swallows up the way of the wicked. .ܕܡܫܝܚ ܕܢܐ ܕܡܫܝܚ.
- VII 10a The Lord reigns forever, .ܕܡܫܝܚ ܕܢܐ ܕܡܫܝܚ.
 b and your God, O Zion, forever and ever. .ܕܡܫܝܚ ܕܢܐ ܕܡܫܝܚ ܕܢܐ.

The analysis of Ps 146 in the Syriac tradition reveals a sophisticated strophic structure delineated by various poetic devices and thematic shifts. This psalm is divided into six distinct strophes, each characterised by unique linguistic and semantic features contributing to its overall coherence and literary artistry.

The first strophe, encompassing vv. 1–2, is demarcated by several notable features. Primarily, it exhibits a pronounced synonymous parallelism. This parallelism is further emphasised by the strategic repetition of key terms such as ܥܒܕܬܐ ‘praise’ and ܠܕܢܐ ‘to the Lord’ in vv. 1a and 2a (+ ܠܕܢܐ in 2b), which serve to bookend the strophic unit. The semantic connection between ܢܦܫܐ ‘my soul’ in v. 1a and ܢܐ ‘I’

³¹⁹ As Taylor et al. (2020, 603) rightly point out, the MT Ps 146 has an inclusion of הללויה whereas P-Ps does not. The second instance of praise of the Lord appears in LXX at the beginning of the following psalm.

in v. 2b further solidifies this strophic boundary. Additionally, the consistent use of the first-person pronoun throughout this section creates a distinct voice, while the alliteration of א and א provides phonetic cohesion.

Verses 3–4 constitute the second strophe, marked by a significant thematic shift from the praise to the teaching. The introduction of negative verb forms signals a transition to a new topic, specifically addressing human frailty and unreliability. This strophe demonstrates semantic coherence, with v. 3 introducing the concept of human weakness, which is then elaborated upon in v. 4, providing a rationale for this frailty.

The third strophe, comprising vv. 5–6b, stands in semantic contrast to the preceding one, focusing on God’s omnipotence and creative power. This section is unified by the repetition of אלהי ‘God’ in vv. 5a–b and the thematic progression from God’s role as helper to His status as creator of the cosmos. The use of universal phenomena שמים ‘heavens’, ארץ ‘earth’, and ימים ‘seas’ creates a comprehensive picture of divine creation. The alliteration of א and א further enhances the strophic cohesion.

Verses 6c–7a form the fourth strophe, a bicolon, characterised by syntactic parallelism and thematic continuity. This section elaborates on God’s attributes and actions.

The fifth strophe, encompassing vv. 7b–8, is notable for its dominant synonymous parallelism and consistent syntax, with the exception of the initial colon in 7b containing an indirect object. The repetition of יהוה ‘Lord’ at the end of each colon serves as a unifying element and emphasises the strophe’s focus while having the same syntax.

Verse 9 constitutes the sixth strophe, distinguished by its tricolon structure and the use of participles (חַיִּים, חַיִּים, and חַיִּים) in each colon. This creates a syntactic parallelism that is complemented by semantic relationships between the cola. The chiasmic structure formed by חַיִּים לַחַיִּים (participle plus object) in colon 9a and חַיִּים לַחַיִּים (object plus participle) in 9c further accentuates this strophic unit.

The final v. 10 forms a distinct strophe characterised by the alliteration of א and א in key terms (אֱלֹהִים, אֱלֹהִים, אֱלֹהִים) and the use of synonyms for divine appellations (אֱלֹהִים and אֱלֹהִים). This bicolon serves as a thematic reprise of the psalm’s opening, creating a quasi-inclusion that frames the entire composition.

The strophic structure of Ps 146 exhibits a varied distribution of cola: four cola in the second and third strophes, two cola in the fourth and seventh strophes, three cola in the first and sixth strophes, and five cola in the fifth strophe.

2.2. The Hebrew text

The Hebrew MT text of Ps 146 and its English translation are the following:³²⁰

³²⁰ Regarding the English translation, I acknowledge the assistance of Bible.org, among which ESV, LSB, and NABRE were more helpful to my translation.

	– Hallelujah!	הללויה
I	1 Praise Yhwh, my soul.	הללי נפשי את־יהוה:
2a	I will praise Yhwh while I live,	אהללה יהוה בחיי
b	I will sing to my God as long as I live.	אזמרה לאלהי בעודי:
II	3a Do not trust in princes,	אל־תבטחו בנדיבים
b	in man, who cannot save.	בבן־אדם שאין לו תשועה:
4a	His spirit departs, he returns to the earth,	תצא רוחו ישב לאדמתו
b	in that very day his thoughts perish.	ביום ההוא אבדו עשתנתיו:
5a	Happy is the one whose help is the God of Jacob,	אשרי שאל יעקב עזרו
b	whose hope is in Yhwh, his God;	שברו על־יהוה אלהיו:
6a	the maker of heavens and earth,	עשה שמים וארץ
b	the sea and everything in them.	את־הים ואת־כל־אשר־בם
III	6c He remains faithful forever,	שמר אמת לעולם
7a	He executes justice for the oppressed,	עשה משפט לעשוקים
b	He gives food to the hungry.	נתן לחם לרעבים
c	Yhwh sets the prisoners free,	יהוה מתיר אסורים
8a	Yhwh opens the eyes of the blind,	יהוה פקח עורים
b	Yhwh raises up those who are bowed down,	יהוה זקף כפופים
c	Yhwh loves the righteous,	יהוה אהב צדיקים
9a	Yhwh protects the strangers;	יהוה שמר את־גרים
b	He supports the fatherless and the widow,	יתום ואלמנה יעודד
c	but He thwarts the way of the wicked.	ודרך רשעים יעות:
IV	10a Yhwh reigns forever,	ימלך יהוה לעולם
b	your God, O Zion, to all generations.	אלהיך ציון לדר ודר
	– Hallelujah!	הללויה

Two minor text-critical problems can be found in cola 5a and 6c. Some scholars and the editors of BHS think that the word בעזרו in colon 5a should be read עזרו, because they think ב must have probably repeated twice.³²¹ Likewise, regarding colon 6c, some scholars hold the view that the word השמר should be read without an article since it would better suit vv. 7a–b.³²² To have better syntactical parallelism, this study accepts the emendation.

The analysis of Ps 146 presents a compelling argument for a four-strophe structure, demonstrating a sophisticated understanding of Hebrew poetic techniques

³²¹ Cheyne 1904, 236; Oesterley 1962, 576; Kraus 1978, 1131; Seybold 1996, 535; Allen 2002, 375; Briggs and Briggs 1906–1907, 532.

³²² Cheyne 1904, 236; Kraus 1978, 1131; Seybold 1996, 535.

and structural markers. The psalm's organisation reveals four strophes in Ps 146 (1–2, 3–6b, 6c–9, 10).³²³

The first strophe, comprising vv. 1–2, is characterised by the repetition of the verb הלל 'to praise' in cola 1a and 2a, coupled with synonymous parallelism. The consistent use of the first-person singular suffix further distinguishes this section, effectively framing the psalm with a personal call to praise and setting the tone for the entire composition.

Verses 3–6b constitute the second strophe, marked by a significant thematic and tonal shift initiated by a vetitive and several negative examples. This section presents a coherent discussion that progresses from prohibiting trust in humans and the other praises the one who trusts God. The strophe is emphasised by the fourteen-fold occurrence of ע and א, creating a phonetic resonance throughout. Word pairs related to creation אדמתו 'soil', ארץ 'earth', שמים 'heavens', and הים 'sea' further highlight the strophe's unity. Notably, the consonant א forms a remarkable inclusion, appearing once with the particle אל and once with the accusative marker את at the beginning of vv. 3a and 6b, respectively. The strophe has mainly synonymous parallelism in the bicola.

The third strophe, encompassing vv. 6c–9, is characterised by a long series of hymnic cola that extol God's actions and support for the needy. This section demonstrates a thematic and semantic shift while maintaining coherence through related themes and consistent syntax. Particularly noteworthy is the repeated use of participles in vv. 6c–9a (שמר 'protecting', עשה 'making', נתן 'giving', מתיר 'untying', פקח 'opening', זקף 'raising up', אהב 'loving', and שמר 'protecting'), which creates a rhythmic cadence. The strophe is further accentuated by the repetition of יהוה, together with the participles, at the beginning of cola 7c, 8a, 8b, 8c and 9a, and the alliteration of י in vv. 7c, 8a, 8b, 8c, 9a and 9b. An end rhyme with ים- in cola 7a–9a, complemented by a ם- in v. 6c (לעולם), underscores the strophe's unity. The grammatical deviation in cola 9b and c might be interpreted as a deliberate poetic strategy to highlight the strophe and its context. Additionally, the prevalent use of synonymous parallelism enriches the strophe's poetic texture.

The fourth strophe, consisting solely of v. 10 as a single bicolon, functions as an individual concept that echoes the first strophe, creating a quasi-inclusion. This

³²³ Van der Lugt (2014, 542) delineates Ps 146 into vv. 1–2, 3–4, 5–6, 7–8, 9–10; Fokkelman (2000, 316) vv. 1–2, 3–4, 5–7b, 7c–9, 10; Terrien (2003, 909–910) vv. 1–2, 3–4, 5–7, 8–9, 10; Seybold (1996, 536, 537) vv. 1, 2, 3–4, 5, 6–7a, 7b–9, 10.

A series of various strophic divisions are also presented by Van der Lugt (2014, 545–546), such as: Gunkel (1926) vv. 1–2, 3–4, 5–6b, 6c–7b, 7c+8a–b, 9a–b+8c+9c, 10; Kraus (1978) vv. 1–2, 3–4, 5–9, 10; Alden (1978) vv. 1, 2, 3–4, 5–9, 10a, 10b; Auffret (1990) vv. 1–2, 3–5, 6–7b, 7c–8b, 8c–9, 10; Hossfeld/Zenger (2008) vv. 1–2, 3, 4, 5, 6–9, 10; Allen (2002) vv. 1–2, 3–6b, 6c–9, 10; Weber (2003) vv. 1–2, 3–4, 5–6, 7–8a, 8b–9, 10.

structure effectively brings the psalm full circle, reinforcing its primary themes and providing a sense of closure.³²⁴

3. Word repetition and sound figures

Generally, the survey indicates that the Syriac translator has attempted to adhere strictly to the Hebrew word order when translating. Therefore, **ܥܒܕ** ‘praise’ in vv. 1a and 2a renders **הלל**, **ܕܝܬܐ** ‘Lord’ in vv. 1a, 2a, 5b, 7b, 7c, 8a, 8b, 8c and 10a translates **יהוה**, **ܐܠܡ** ‘God’ in vv. 2b, 5a, 5b and 10b **ܐܠܗܝܡ** and **ܐܪܥܐ** ‘earth’ in vv. 4a and 6a **ܐܪܥܐ** and **ܐܕܡܐ**, **ܠܥܠܡ** in vv. 4b and 6b **ܥܒܕ** ‘make’ in vv. 6a and 7a **ܥܫܐ**, **ܠܥܠܡ** ‘forever’ in vv. 6c and 10a **ܬܦܝܠ** ‘protect’ in vv. 6c and 9a **ܫܡܪ**.

It should be mentioned that in some cases, the Syriac translator highlights the word repetition by replacing different Hebrew words with a single Syriac word, for example, in cola 4a and 6a where the Hebrew text uses two words of **אדמתו** and **ארץ** for ‘earth’, while the Syriac text uses a single word **ܐܪܥܐ**. Similarly, the feature occurs in colon 5a, where this time, the Hebrew text uses **אל** for God, but the Syriac text chooses **ܐܠܡ** to underline the repetition. Likewise, the Syriac translator adds an extra word to better clarify the text to the reader, leading to a more intense word repetition, for instance, in v. 4b, where the Syriac text adds the word **ܠܥܠܡ** ‘all’, which is absent from the Hebrew text.

It can be concluded that word repetition in the Syriac text is more intensive and serves a more prominent function compared to the Hebrew text. The following table illustrates the repetition frequency of Hebrew and Syriac words.

Hebrew text	Syriac text
הלל (1a, 2a)	ܥܒܕ (1a, 2a)
יהוה (1a, 2a, 5b, 7c, 8a, 8b, 8c, 9a, 10a)	ܕܝܬܐ (1a, 2a, 5b, 7b, 8a, 8b, 8c, 10a)
אלהים (2b, 5b, 10b)	ܐܠܡ (2b, 5a, 5b, 10b)
אל (3a, 5b)	ܠܥܠܡ (3a, 2x, 5b)
	ܐܪܥܐ (4a, 6a)
	ܥܒܕ (4b, 6b)
עשה (6a, 7a)	ܥܒܕ (6a, 7a)
שמר (6c, 9a)	ܬܦܝܠ (6b, 9c)
לעולם (6c, 10a)	ܠܥܠܡ (6c, 10a)
80 words and 22 repetitions of 7 words	81 words and 27 repetitions of 9 words

³²⁴ Van der Lugt (2014, 546) suggests a more comprehensive approach, incorporating repetition, transition markers (vocatives, imperatives, cohortatives), inclusion, and quantitative metrics leading to the number 9 as structuring elements. Fokkelman (2000, 317) employs word repetition, thematic shifts, and colometrical numbers as strophic markers. Terrien (2003, 909) focuses on thematic and topic shifts.

As for the sound figures and especially the alliteration, the fivefold $\aleph$ - and $\beth$ -alliteration in cola 2a (ܐܠܠܝܚܐ) and 2b (ܐܠܠܝܚܐ, ܐܠܠܝܚܐ, ܐܠܠܝܚܐ, ܐܠܠܝܚܐ) highlights the first strophe. It should be mentioned that the consonants of $\aleph$ and $\beth$ also complete alliteration in the first strophe of the Hebrew text. Besides, it is worth noting that the consonant η , repeated nine times, is the dominant sound of the first strophe in the Hebrew text. In the second strophe, the five-fold $\aleph$ - and $\beth$ -alliteration in cola 3a (ܐܠܠܝܚܐ x2), 3b (ܐܠܠܝܚܐ), 4a (ܐܠܠܝܚܐ), 4b (ܐܠܠܝܚܐ) again highlights the strophe. Additionally, the threefold $\beth$ -alliteration in cola 3a (ܐܠܠܝܚܐ), 3b (ܐܠܠܝܚܐ) and 4b (ܐܠܠܝܚܐ) adds even more alliterative sound play to the strophe.

In the second Hebrew strophe, $\beth$ constitutes alliteration but not as intensively as in the Syriac text. It is noticeable that $\aleph$ and $\beth$ in the second strophe of the Hebrew text underline a much stronger alliteration compared to its Syriac counterpart. Moreover, the consonant $\aleph$ forms an inclusion in cola 3a and 6b of the second strophe. The sevenfold $\aleph$ - and $\beth$ -alliteration in 5a (ܐܠܠܝܚܐ, ܐܠܠܝܚܐ), 5b (ܐܠܠܝܚܐ, ܐܠܠܝܚܐ), 6a (ܐܠܠܝܚܐ, ܐܠܠܝܚܐ) and 6b (ܐܠܠܝܚܐ) underscores the third strophe. It appears that the third Syriac strophe does benefit from a rich alliterative pattern. The alliteration of $\aleph$ and $\beth$ in the third strophe of the Hebrew text is more remarkable than in Syriac, and the η -alliteration does not contest with the Syriac one. showcases the intensive application of the η consonant, mainly as part of the masculine plural ending ־ים at the end of the final word of each colon (7a, 7b, 7c, 8a, 8b, 8c and 9a, + לְעוֹלָם in 6c). Furthermore, the eightfold $\beth$ -alliteration within the third strophe of the Hebrew psalm is outstanding.

The fourth Syriac strophe is poor regarding alliterative structures and just forms a small double $\beth$ -alliteration.

The fifth Syriac strophe is characterised by five-fold $\beth$ -alliteration because of the repetition of the word ܐܠܠܝܚܐ , which highlights the strophe. Moreover, the consonant $\beth$ in cola 7b and 8c causes inclusion, which punctuates the strophe. It is worth mentioning that the use of the $\aleph$ -consonant at the end of the final word of each Syriac colon in 7b, 7c, 8a, 8b and 8c, within the fifth Syriac strophes is striking. The sixth strophe is punctuated by a four-fold $\beth$ -alliteration, followed by small $\aleph$ - and $\beth$ -alliteration to underscore the strophe.

The Hebrew text exhibits a distinctive quadruple occurrence of the $\beth$ -phoneme in the fourth strophe. In parallel, its corresponding Syriac counterpart—positioned as the seventh strophe—demonstrates minimal phonological patterning, characterised by sparse $\aleph$ - and $\beth$ -alliteration.

In conclusion, both versions demonstrate significant use of word repetition, alliteration, and consonant repetition, which serve as crucial markers for the strophic structure. These literary devices not only enhance the aesthetic quality of the psalm but also play a vital role in emphasising key themes and creating cohesion within the text.

A notable distinction emerges in the distribution and intensity of these poetic devices between the two versions:

1. Alliteration: the Hebrew text exhibits a more intensive distribution of alliterative patterns than the Syriac version. This heightened use of alliteration in the Hebrew original contributes to a more pronounced rhythmic quality and potentially emphasises certain semantic or thematic elements within the psalm.
2. Word repetition: conversely, the Syriac text demonstrates a more extensive use of word repetition than its Hebrew counterpart. This increased repetition in the Syriac version reinforces key concepts or creates a more pronounced sense of parallelism, like the bicolon 5 within the translated text.
3. Strophic distribution: the allocation of both word repetition and alliterative patterns varies across strophes in both versions.
4. Dominant sounds: a striking similarity between the two versions is the prominence of specific consonants. In the Syriac text, the consonants ܠ and ܬ dominate, while in the Hebrew text, ʾ, ʏ, and ʁ are the most prevalent.

The preservation of these phonetic and structural elements in the Syriac translation, despite the inherent differences between the two languages, indicates a sophisticated approach to translation that sought to maintain not only the semantic content but also the poetic and auditory qualities of the original Hebrew psalm.

4. Parallelism and syntax in the Syriac psalm

The comparative analysis of Ps 146 in MT and the Syriac Leiden edition reveals a remarkable consistency in parallelistic structures, demonstrating the Syriac translator's commitment to preserving the poetic integrity of the source text. This preservation of parallelism, evident in vv. 2, 5, 7, 8 and 9 in both versions, underscores the translator's sophisticated approach to maintaining not only the semantic content but also the literary devices of the original Hebrew.³²⁵

Several key observations emerge from this analysis:

1. Structural fidelity: the Syriac translator's adherence to the Hebrew word order has successfully transposed parallelism into the target language. This fidelity to the original structure suggests a deep understanding of the poetic significance of parallelism in Hebrew biblical poetry and a deliberate effort to maintain this crucial component in the Syriac rendition.
2. Variation in word placement: a notable divergence occurs in the fifth Syriac strophe, specifically in vv. 7b–8c. Here, the repetition of ܠܐܝܗ 'Lord' at the end of each colon in 7b–8c contrasts with the Hebrew text, where the equivalent term appears at the beginning of each colon in 7c–9a. This variation could be attributed to either (a) a conscious stylistic choice by the Syriac translator to emphasise this

³²⁵ Van Peursen (2007, 67) indicates that parallelism mainly derives from the Hebrew original.

key concept within the strophe's theme or (b) the possibility of a slightly different source manuscript being used for the translation. The first reason is much more likely. But regardless of the cause, this structural modification highlights the central role of the divine name in the strophe's thematic development.

3. Word order and syntactic modifications: while generally adhering to the Hebrew word order, the Syriac translation occasionally deviates through omissions, additions, or syntactic restructuring. These modifications appear to be motivated by a desire to enhance clarity and precision in the target language, demonstrating the translator's attention to both form and meaning.
4. Systematic use of the waw copula: a distinctive feature of the Syriac rendition is the methodical deployment of the waw copula throughout the psalm. Its presence in every strophe (specifically in 2b, 4b, 5b, 6b, 7a, 9a, 9c and 10b) suggests a deliberate stylistic choice.³²⁶ They are present throughout the psalm, apart from the fifth strophe in vv. 7b–8. This systematic use of the waw copula shows that it tends to appear at the beginning of the last colon of a bicolon or a tricolon, thus underlining the parallelism.

5. Quantitative poetic analysis

Below is a table showing the metrics of the Syriac psalm according to the Leiden edition by counting both syllables and words in separate cola.

Strophes	Verses	Words	Words in verses	Syllables	Syllables in verses	Colometry	Transliteration	
I	1a	3	3	5	5	13	<i>Šab/baḥ/ naḥš/ lmār/yā</i>	ܫܒܒܚܐ ܠܗܝܐ.
	2a	3	8	7	15	13	<i>E/šab/baḥ/ lmār/yā/ḥay/yay</i>	ܐܫܒܒܚܐ ܠܗܝܐ ܚܝܐ.
	b	5		8		18	<i>wez/mar/la/lāh/‘aḏ/qay/yām/ nā</i>	ܘܠܡܪ ܠܗܝܐ ܥܕܐ ܩܝܝܡܐ ܢܐ.
II	3a	6	9	12	18	23	<i>Lā/ṭet/tak/lun/‘al/ša/li/ṭā/w‘al/bar/ nā/šā</i>	ܠܐ ܬܬܬܐ ܬܐܟܠܢ ܥܠ ܫܐܠܝܬܐ ܠܐ ܬܠܝܬܐ ܠܐ ܬܠܝܬܐ ܢܐ ܫܐ.
	b	3		6		15	<i>dlayt/ bi/qēh/ pur/qā/nā</i>	ܕܠܝܬ ܒܝ ܩܝܗܐ ܦܘܪ ܩܐܢܐ.
	4a	4	9	8	19	18	<i>Dnāf/qā/ru/hēh/whā/feḵ/lar/‘ēh</i>	ܕܢܐܦ ܩܐܪܘ ܗܝܗ ܘܗܐ ܦܝܚܐ ܠܐܪܥܐ.
	b	5		11		24	<i>wab/hāw/ yaw/mā/ āḇ/dān/ kol/hēn/ maḥš/bā/ṭēh</i>	ܘܒܗܐ ܝܐܘܡܐ ܐܒܕܐܢ ܕܐܝܬܐ ܠܗܝܐ ܡܚܫܒܐ ܬܐܝܬܐ.

³²⁶ The text-critical apparatus of the Leiden edition highlights considerable variation among Syriac manuscripts in the use of the copula at the beginning of the colon in vv. 7–10. This inconsistency suggests a degree of uncertainty within the tradition regarding the application of the waw, a fact of which the study is aware.

III	5a	5	9	10	18	25	<i>Ṭu/hāw/lman/da/lā/hēh/dya 'qob/</i> <i>b'ed/rēh</i>	ܬܘ ܗܐܘ ܠܡܢ ܕܐ ܠܐ ܗܝܗ ܕܝܐ ܩܐܒ ܒ ܐܕ ܪܝܗ
	b	4		8		15	<i>wsab/rēh/ 'al/mār/yā/ 'a/lā/hēh</i>	ܘܣܒ ܪܝܗ ܥܠ ܡܐܪ ܝܐ ܐ ܠܐ ܗܝܗ
	6a	3	7	6	11	13	<i>Da 'bad/ šmay/yā/ war/ 'ā</i>	ܕܐ ܒܕ ܫܡܝ ܝܐ ܘܪ ܐ
	b	4		5		16	<i>wyam/mē/ wkol/ di/ bhon</i>	ܘܝܡ ܡܝ ܘܟܠ ܕܝ ܒܗܢ
IV	6c	3	6	6	13	12	<i>Nā/ṭar/ quš/tā/ l 'ā/lam</i>	ܢܐ ܬܪ ܩܘܫ ܬܐ ܠ ܐ ܠܡ
	7a	3		7		14	<i>W'ā/bēd/ di/nā/ laṭ/li/mē</i>	ܘܐ ܒܝܕ ܕܝ ܢܐ ܠܬ ܠܝ ܡܝ
V	7b	4	7	8	15	16	<i>yā/heb/laḥ/mā/lkaf/nē/mār/yā</i>	ܝܐ ܗܝܒ ܠܚ ܡܐ ܠܟܦ ܢܝ ܡܐܪ ܝܐ
	c	3		7		12	<i>šā/rē/ 'a/si/rē/ mār/yā</i>	ܫܐ ܪܝ ܐ ܣܝ ܪܝ ܡܐܪ ܝܐ
	8a	3	9	6	19	12	<i>pā/ṭaḥ/ 'wī/rē/ mār/yā</i>	ܦܐ ܬܚ ܘܝ ܪܝ ܡܐܪ ܝܐ
	b	3		6		12	<i>tā/reš/ kfi/fē/ mār/yā</i>	ܬܐ ܪܝܫ ܟܦܝ ܦܝ ܡܐܪ ܝܐ
	c	3		7		12	<i>rā/ḥem/ zad/di/qē/ mār/yā</i>	ܪܐ ܚܝܡ ܙܕ ܕܝ ܩܝ ܡܐܪ ܝܐ
VI	9a	2	8	6	20	11	<i>wam/naṭ/ṭar/ lmes/kē/nē</i>	ܘܡ ܢܬ ܬܪ ܠܡܝܫ ܟܝ ܢܝ
	b	3		7		18	<i>mṭar/sē/ lyaṭ/mē/ wlarm/lā/ṭā</i>	ܡܬܪ ܣܝ ܠܝܬ ܡܝ ܘܠܪܡ ܠܐ ܬܐ
	c	3		7		15	<i>wur/hā/d 'aw/wā/lē/mṭab/ba</i>	ܘܪ ܗܐ ܕ ܐܘ ܘܐ ܠܝ ܡܬܒ ܒܐ
VII	10a	3	6	6	14	12	<i>Am/lek/ mār/yā/ l 'ā/lam</i>	ܐܡ ܠܝܟ ܡܐܪ ܝܐ ܠ ܐ ܠܡ
	b	3		8		18	<i>wa/lā/hēk/ṣeh/yon/lḏār/dā/rin</i>	ܘܐ ܠܐ ܗܝܟ ܫܝܗ ܝܢ ܠܕܐܪ ܕܐ ܪܝܢ

The versification analysis of Ps 146 in the Syriac text of the Leiden edition reveals a complex structural composition, exhibiting a diverse arrangement of cola comprising two bicola, two tricola, two tetracola, and one pentacolon.

The psalm's strophic arrangement can be delineated as follows: the initial strophe presents a tricolon in vv. 1–2, characterised by a syllabic and lexical distribution of 20:11, respectively. The second strophe encompasses two bicola in vv. 3–4, with a syllabic and lexical arrangement of 18:19 and 9:9, respectively. The third strophe mirrors the second, containing two bicola in vv. 5–6b, with a syllabic and lexical distribution of 18:11 and 9:7, respectively. The fourth strophe presents a bicolon in vv. 6c–7a, featuring a syllabic and lexical arrangement of 13:6. The fifth strophe comprises a bicolon in v. 7b–c (15 syllables and 7 words) and a tetracolon in v. 8 (19 syllables and 9 words). The sixth strophe contains a tricolon in v. 9, with a syllabic and lexical distribution of 20 and 8, respectively. The final strophe concludes with a bicolon in v. 10, characterised by an arrangement of 14 syllables and 6 words.

A notable symmetrical structure emerges when considering the second and third strophes together. Verses 3–4 and 5–6b display a balanced distribution of syllables (18:19, 18:11) and an even word count (9:9, 9:7), except for the final bicolon (v. 6a, b), which provides a sense of closure. Notably, the first strophe shows a tendency to the balanced level of the second and third strophes with 20 syllables and 11 words. This symmetry suggests a deliberate poetic construction, potentially distinguishing these strophes from the following strophes. The statistical analysis reveals a range of 5–12 syllables per colon, with a word count varying from 2 to 6.

In total, the Syriac psalm comprises 167 syllables distributed across 23 cola, yielding an average of 7.26 syllables per colon which slightly less than usual. The number of syllables varies between 5 and 12, while the word count ranges from 3 to 6. Furthermore, the colometrical examination highlights a balanced consonantal length in specific vv. 6c–7a (12:14) and vv. 7c–8c (12:12:12:12) demonstrate balance. Notably, it coincides with the dominating word number of 3 in these cola.

The following is the result of considering the number of syllables, words and consonants in each strophe:

Strophes	Verses	Syllables	Words	Colometry
I	1–2	20	11	44
II	3–4	37	18	80
III	5–6b	29	16	69
IV	6c–7a	13	6	26
V	7b–8	34	16	64
VI	9	20	8	44
VII	10	14	6	30

The first and sixth strophes demonstrate a perfectly balanced ratio in terms of syllable count, highlighting a deliberate structural design. This symmetry is further reinforced by the balanced nature of the second and fifth strophes, as well as the fourth and seventh strophes. The word ratio analysis unveils additional layers of structural harmony, with the second, third, and fifth strophes exhibiting a balanced 18:16:16 ratio, while the fourth, sixth, and seventh strophes maintain an equilibrium of 6:8:6 words.

From a colometrical perspective, the first and sixth strophes showcase a perfectly balanced consonantal length of 44:44, further emphasising the symmetry in the psalm’s composition. Despite these balanced elements, the psalm predominantly features strophes with varying numbers of cola, indicating a complex and uneven structural approach. The metrical pattern across the psalm indicates a heterosyllabic pattern with an occasional tendency to isosyllabism in its composition.

We will now consider the Hebrew text. The following table illustrates the number of syllables and words in each cola as well as in verses.³²⁷ The colometrical results are also presented.

³²⁷ Van der Lugt (2014, 544) notes that Fokkelman (2002) asserts that the psalm consists of 11 verses and 24 cola. Specifically, he regards the heading הללויה as an opening colon and considers vv. 7a–8a as a bicolon and vv. 8b–9a, 9b–c, respectively, as a tricolon and a bicolon.

Strophes	Verses	Words	Words in verses	Syllables	Syllable in verses	Colometry		
							הללויה	
I	1a	4	4	7	7	14	הל/לי/ נפ/שי/ את/יה/וה	הללי נפשי את־יהוה
	2a	3	6	8	18	13	א/הל/לה/ יה/וה/ ב/חי/י	אהללה יהוה בחי
	b	3		10		15	א/זמ/מ/רה/ לא/ל/הי/ ב/עו/די	אזמרה לאלהי בעודי
II	3a	3	8	7	17	14	אל/תב/ט/חו/ בנ/די/בים	אל־תבטחו בנדיבים
	b	5		10		17	ב/בן/א/דס/ ש/אין/ לו/ ת/שו/עה	בבן־אדם שאין לו תשועה
	4a	4	8	10	20	16	ת/צא/ רו/חו/ י/שב/ ל/אד/מ/תו	תצא רוחו ישב לאדמתו
	b	4		10		19	בי/יום/ ה/הוא/ אב/דו/ עש/ת/נ/תיו	ביום ההוא אבדו עשתנתיו
	5a	4	8	9	17	15	אש/רי/ ש/אל/ י/ע/קב/ עז/רו	אשרי שאל יעקב עזרו
	b	4		8		15	שב/רו/ על/יה/וה/ א/ל/היו	שברו עלי־הוה אלהיו
	6a	3	8	8	17	11	ע/שה/ ש/מ/ים/ ו/א/רץ	עשה שמים וארץ
	b	5		9		15	את/הי/ים/ ו/את/כל/א/שר/בם	את־הים ואת־כל־אשר־בם
III	6c	3	3	7	7	11	ש/מר/ א/מת/ ל/עו/לם	שמר אמת לעולם
	7a	3	9	8	22	14	ע/שה/ מש/פט/ ל/ע/שו/קים	עשה משפט לעשוקים
	b	3		7		12	נ/תן/ ל/חם/ לר/ע/בים	נתן לחם לרעבים
	c	3		7		14	יה/וה/ מת/תיר/ א/סו/רים	יהוה מתיר אסורים
	8a	3	9	6	20	12	יה/וה/ פ/קח/ עו/רים	יהוה פקח עורים
	b	3		7		13	יה/וה/ ז/קף/ כ/פו/פים	יהוה זקף כפופים
	c	3		7		13	יה/וה/ א/הב/ צד/די/קים	יהוה אהב צדיקים
	9a	4	10	7	25	13	יה/וה/ ש/מר/ את/ג/רים	יהוה שמר את־גרים
	b	3		9		15	יתום/ ו/אל/מ/נה/ י/עו/דד	יתום ואלמנה יעודד
	c	3		9		13	ו/ד/רדך/ ר/ש/עים/ י/עו/ות	ודרך רשעים יעות
IV	10a	3	7	7	17	13	ימ/לך/ יה/וה/ ל/עו/לם	ימלך יהוה לעולם
	b	4		10		15	א/ל/ה/יד/ צי/וון/ ל/דר/ ו/דר	אלהיך ציון לדר ודר
								הללויה

The colometrical analysis of the Hebrew text of Ps 146 reveals a sophisticated structural composition with notable patterns of balance and symmetry. The colometrical ratio demonstrates a consistent equilibrium throughout the psalm, except v. 6, which presents an anomalous ratio of 11:15.

The Hebrew text exhibits a remarkably consistent range of 3 to 5 words per colon, indicating a controlled and measured approach to the psalm's composition. Furthermore, all verses maintain a balanced syllable count, contributing to the overall rhythmic coherence of the text. Compared to the Syriac version, the Hebrew psalm demonstrates a more pronounced balance in both syllabic structure and colometry,

suggesting a potentially more refined or deliberately crafted poetic structure in the original Hebrew.

An analysis of the psalm's strophic structure in terms of word count and syllables reveals intriguing patterns. The first strophe contains 10 words and 25 syllables, the second strophe 32 words and 71 syllables, the third strophe 31 words and 74 syllables, and the fourth strophe 7 words and 17 syllables. This distribution highlights a notable balance between the second and third strophes, both in terms of word count and syllabic structure, potentially indicating a central thematic or structural focus within these sections.

The range of syllables per colon in the Hebrew text spans from 6 to 10, demonstrating a wider variability than the word count per colon. Of particular interest is the second strophe, which exhibits a remarkably balanced structure with a syllabic pattern of 17:20:17:20 per verse and a consistent word count of 8:8:8:8. This highly symmetrical arrangement stands out within the psalm's composition and serves to emphasise the content or theme of this particular strophe.

Examining the consonantal and word distribution across strophes provides further insights into the psalm's structure. The first strophe comprises 10 words and 42 consonants, the second strophe 32 words and 122 consonants, the third strophe 31 words and 130 consonants, and the fourth strophe 7 words and 28 consonants. While there is no apparent correlation or balanced colometry between strophes at this level, the word counts across strophes maintain a degree of equilibrium, particularly between the second and third strophes.

In total, the psalm consists of 187 syllables distributed across 23 cola, resulting in an average of 8.13 syllables per colon. This average syllable count, higher than that observed in the Syriac version (7.26), suggests a more expansive or elaborate expression in the Hebrew text.

These findings collectively paint a picture of a meticulously crafted poetic structure in the Hebrew version of Ps 146. The balanced syllabic and word distributions, coupled with the consistent colometrical ratios (barring v. 6), indicate a high level of poetic sophistication. The symmetry observed, particularly in the second strophe and between the second and third strophes, suggests deliberate structural choices that correlate with the psalm's thematic development or rhetorical emphasis.

6. Conclusion

The Syriac translator employs a sophisticated array of techniques to delineate Ps 146 into distinct strophes, demonstrating a nuanced understanding of both the source text's structure and the target language's poetic capabilities. The strophic markers utilised by the translator include a combination of semantic, syntactic, and phonetic elements, each contributing to the clear demarcation of the psalm's structural units.

Semantic shifts and thematic coherence serve as primary strophic markers, with each strophe presenting a unified concept or a contrasting idea to the previous one. This is evident in the transition from human frailty in the second strophe to God's

omnipotence in the third. Syntactic parallelism and consistent structural patterns are also employed to define strophic boundaries, as seen in the fourth and sixth strophes. Phonetic devices, particularly alliteration of specific consonants like ܠ and ܕ, contribute to strophic cohesion. Word repetition is crucial, with key terms serving as unifying elements. The translator also utilises grammatical features, such as the consistent use of participles, to delineate structural units. Finally, the creation of inclusion through thematic reprise in the final strophe demonstrates the translator's attention to the overall compositional structure of the psalm. This multifaceted approach to strophic delineation reflects the translator's commitment to preserving and enhancing the poetic integrity of the original Hebrew text within the Syriac linguistic framework.

The Syriac translator's familiarity with Hebrew poetic devices is evident in preserving key elements such as parallelism, repetition, alliteration, and strophic demarcation. However, the application of these devices in the Syriac text shows notable variations, indicating a nuanced approach to translation that goes beyond mere literal rendering.

A particularly salient example of this adaptive approach is observed in the fifth strophe, specifically vv. 7b and 8. Here, the Syriac text exhibits a distinctive structural pattern in the positioning of ܕܡܠܚܬܐ. While the Hebrew text places יהוה at the beginning of each colon in 7c–9a, the Syriac version consistently positions it at the end of each colon in 7b–8c. The Syriac translator's unconventional word order functions as a deliberate poetic device, emphasising divine functions through syntactical modification. This marked arrangement reinforces both the strophe's thematic focus and the theological weight of its assertions.

Word repetition emerges as the most prominent poetic feature in the Syriac rendition employed more extensively than in its Hebrew counterpart. This intensification of repetitive elements may serve to enhance the text's mnemonic qualities or to reinforce key theological concepts. While present in both versions, alliteration manifests differently in the Syriac text, exhibiting a slightly reduced intensity compared to the Hebrew original.

The Syriac translator's commitment to precision and clarity is evident in occasional additions and omissions, reflecting a careful balance between fidelity to the source text and the need for comprehensibility in the target language. This approach underscores the translator's role not merely as a linguistic mediator but as an interpreter of the text's deeper meaning and structure.

Colometry, an established feature in the Hebrew composition of Ps 146, finds a counterpart in the Syriac version through syllabic patterning. The Syriac text demonstrates a metrical structure based on syllable count rather than strict adherence to Hebrew colometrical principles. Quantitative analysis reveals that the Syriac psalm yields an average of 7.26 syllables per colon. This contrasts with the Hebrew version, which has a slightly higher average of 8.13 syllables per colon.

Ps 146 exhibits variability in cola count, adhering to a heterosyllabic metrical pattern with occasional balanced verses. This structural flexibility may reflect the

translator's attempt to balance fidelity to the original text with the rhythmic and phonetic requirements of the Syriac language.

Although the discovery indicates that the metrical patterns and strophic structures are not entirely compatible with those found in classical Syriac poetry, they share features such as word repetition, thematic coherence, parallelism, and occasional rhythmic and isosyllabic patterns. These similarities suggest a likely connection between the structure of P-Ps and characteristics found in classical Syriac poetry.

CHAPTER TEN: PSALM 155

1. General information

Psalm 155 is part of the five apocryphal psalms. Its translation is generally believed to have been made in the late 8th century, based on the discovery of Hebrew scrolls near Jericho around 786. The apocryphal psalms were recorded in the 10th century by Elijah of Anbar and later included in a 12th-century Syriac Psalter and a 19th-century biblical manuscript. Consequently, they are not connected to the P translation and were translated during the period of classical Syriac poetry.

Psalm 155 presents a unique amalgamation of lament and thanksgiving, incorporating elements characteristic of both genres within biblical poetry. The composition exhibits a tripartite structure: an opening invocation (vv. 1–6), a central plea for divine mercy (vv. 7–14), and a concluding expression of faith (vv. 15–21).

The initial segment features an earnest appeal to the deity, imploring for attentive listening. This transitions into the psalm's core, where the supplicant seeks both absolution and restoration. The final portion showcases the petitioner's unwavering confidence in divine benevolence.³²⁸

This psalm demonstrates a rich tapestry of religious motifs prevalent in Hebrew literature. It addresses themes such as the remission of transgressions (evidenced in vv. 8 and 12) and devotion to religious statutes (v. 9). Furthermore, the text employs linguistic devices and imagery commonly associated with both lamentations and thanksgiving hymns, particularly evident in the opening and closing sections (vv. 1–7 and 17–20, respectively).³²⁹

Ps 155 has been characterised as a psalm of thanksgiving, simultaneously comprising an entreaty for salvation, bearing resemblances to Ps 22 and Ps 51. The presence of shared attributes inherent in penitential prayer, alongside the utilisation of strong language expressing repentance towards the divine, suggests that Ps 155 bears a probable intention for liturgical use.³³⁰ Noth was convinced that this psalm bears the closest resemblance to the Old Testament psalms.³³¹ Van der Woude thinks that apocryphal psalms date back to the late Persian and early Hellenistic periods.³³²

Regarding the strophic division, Ps 155 is highly intricate, possibly indicating that we are dealing with Hebrew poetry that originates from the latter half of the 2nd century BCE, as suggested by the manuscript's dating to the first half of the 1st century BCE.³³³

³²⁸ Rudnig 2024, 572.

³²⁹ Ibid.

³³⁰ Pajunen 2021, 441.

³³¹ Noth 1930, 12.

³³² Van der Woude 1974, 34.

³³³ Sanders 1965, 9.

Regarding the Syriac text, Manuscript Baghdad (formerly known as Mosul), Library of the Chaldean Patriarchate 1113 (S12t4), appears to be the foremost textual authority regarding the Syriac apocryphal psalms.³³⁴ There is an estimate of 95 per cent of correspondence in wording between 11QPs^a and the Hebrew text used by the Syriac translator.³³⁵ It should be noted that the Hebrew Ps 155 is an unfinished acrostic (the scroll goes from letters א to י, and the Syriac rendering contains slightly more, up to the letter פ)³³⁶. It is unclear why it was not included in the Masoretic canon, but one can surmise that it was not known to the compilers. Psalms 152–155, unlike Ps 151, are also not attested in LXX. For a long time, it was assumed that they were Greek compositions, either by Hellenised Jews or not by Jews at all, but when the Dead Sea Scrolls were discovered, especially 11Q5, all hypotheses were overturned. Before that, Noth suggested that the five Syriac psalms were based on Hebrew originals.³³⁷

The examination of this particular psalm serves as a comparative analysis to determine potential divergences from the established canonical Psalter, with specific attention to textual and structural variations that might indicate distinct compositional or theological characteristics.

2. The text and strophic structure

2.1. The Syriac text

The text of Ps 155, according to the Leiden edition (1972), and its translation into English is as follows.³³⁸ The Roman numbers refer to the strophes, which will be explained below.³³⁹

³³⁴ Butts 2019, 296.

³³⁵ Brown 2014, 625; Butts 2019, 300.

³³⁶ Brown (2014, 621–629). Brown suggests that the psalm has a total of twenty-one verses, with only vv. 1–19 fully preserved in 11QPs^a (col. 24:3–17). This is a partially incomplete acrostic psalm, with a verse count of twenty-one instead of the expected twenty-two. Interestingly, the final verse in the Mosul text ends with the letter פ, rather than the expected ת. In 11QPs^a, v. 5 represents the ב-verse, v. 6 represents the ג-verse and vv. 9–18 represent the ה through י-verses. However, the fourth line starts with י (representing יהוה) instead of the expected ד.

³³⁷ Noth 1930, 11.

³³⁸ The English translation is according to Taylor et al. (2020) but has been modified occasionally.

³³⁹ In contrast to other psalms analysed in this study, Ps 155 is interspersed with Syriac vocals and other signs at certain points, owing to the fact that the Leiden edition of the text includes them.

I	1	O Lord, I cried out to you. Listen to me.	חַיִּיךָ מִלִּפְנֵי לִבִּי הָיָה לִּי.
	2	I stretched out my hands to your holy habitations.	פָּעַלְתָּ מִיָּדְךָ לְחַדְשֵׁיךָ דְמוּתְךָ אֱלֹהִים.
II	3	Incline your ear and give me my petition,	כִּי־תִשְׁמַע אָזְנוֹךָ לִּי וְתִתֵּן לִּי כְּפִלְתִּי.
	4	my plea does not hold back from me.	כִּי־לֹא יִפְסַח מִפִּי חֶסְדְּךָ.
	5	Build up my soul ³⁴⁰ and do not destroy it,	בְּנֵה לִּי נַפְשִׁי וְלֹא תִשְׁחָדֵךְ.
	6	and do not uncover it before the wicked ones.	וְלֹא תִפְתָּח בְּפָנֵי הַרְשָׁעִים.
III	7a	Turn away from me those who repay with evil.	פְּזֹחַ כְּעֵלֶיךָ יִפְרֹץ מִיָּדְךָ.
	b	O Judge of truth, do not judge me, O Lord,	דִּן־תִּשְׁפֹּט בְּחֵן הַאֱמֻנָה לֹא תִשְׁפֹּט אֶת־אֲדָמָתְךָ אֱלֹהִים.
		according to my sins,	סְלִיחָתִי.
	8	because every life is guilty before you.	כִּי־לֹא יִפְסַח מִפִּי חֶסְדְּךָ.
IV	10a	So that many may hear of your deeds,	דְּמוּתְךָ יִשְׁמַע מִרְבֵּעַ כָּל־בָּרִיָּה.
	b	and people may give thanks for your honour.	וְיִתְּנוּ לְפָנֶיךָ תְּהִלָּתְךָ אֱלֹהִים.
V	11a	Remember me and do not forget me,	זָכוֹר־תִּזְכֹּר מִיָּדְךָ אֱלֹהִים.
	b	and do not allow me to enter too difficult for me.	וְלֹא תִשְׁמַח בְּכִשְׁלֹנִי מִיָּדְךָ.
	12a	The sins of my childhood remove from me,	סְלִיחָתִי מִיָּמַי הַבְּרִיָּא יִסְחָרֵךְ.
	b	and my rebellion do not remember against me.	וְכִשְׁלֹנִי לֹא תִזְכֹּר בִּי.
	13a	Cleanse me, O Lord, from the evil leprosy,	תִּצְהַר מִיָּדְךָ אֱלֹהִים מִכָּל־רָעָה.
	b	and do not let it again return to me.	וְלֹא תִשְׁבֹּר לִּי מִיָּדְךָ רָעָה.
	14a	Dry up its roots from me,	יָבֹשׁ חֲמוֹמָתִי מִיָּדְךָ.
	b	and do not let its leaves bud in me.	וְלֹא תִפְתָּח בִּי עֵצֶיךָ מִיָּדְךָ.
VI	15a	Strong and great you are, O Lord,	חֲסִידֶיךָ אֱלֹהִים חֲסִידֶיךָ.
	b	hence, my petition will be fulfilled from before you.	כִּי־לֹא יִפְסַח מִפִּי חֶסְדְּךָ.
	16a	To whom may I complain, and he would give to me,	לִּי־יִתֵּן מִיָּדְךָ אֱלֹהִים.
	b	and humans, what can their strength add?	וְחִיָּוִתִּים מִיָּדְךָ אֱלֹהִים.
VII	17a	From before you, O Lord, is my confidence.	מִיָּדְךָ אֱלֹהִים חֲסִידֶיךָ.
	17b	I cried to the Lord, and he answered to me,	קָרָאתִי לַיהוָה וְהוֹדִיָּתִי.
	c	and healed my broken heart.	וְרָפָא לִי לִבִּי הַשָּׁבִיב.
	18a	I slumbered and slept,	נִחַמְתִּי וְנִשְׁכַּחְתִּי.
	b	I dreamt, nevertheless I was aroused, and you	נִחַמְתִּי אֲבָרְאָה וְאַתָּה אֱלֹהִים מְהֵרָה תִּשְׁמָעֵנִי.
		supported me, O Lord,	וְתִשְׁתָּחֵזְקֵנִי אֱלֹהִים.

³⁴⁰ Taylor et al. (2020, 631) provide a translation of “seek my life” based on the reading of Ms 12t4 **חַיִּי**. However, since the other manuscripts read **חַסְדְּךָ** and this reading presents a paradox between building and destroying that seems more reasonable, I have opted for this reading instead.

19a	and I shall cry out in complaint, ³⁴¹	וְאֶמְצִי קוֹל בְּתַלְתִּי.
b	because the Lord has delivered me.	כִּי הוֹצִיא נְשִׁי מִיָּדִי.
20a	Now I shall behold their shame,	כֹּסֶם אֶשְׁמַח בְּשִׁמְתָם.
b	I trusted in you and shall not be ashamed.	וְלֹא אֶשְׁתָּבֵשׁ בְּיָדְךָ.
VIII 20c	Give honour for ever and ever.	וְתִתֵּן כְּבוֹד לְדָלִיךְ לְעֹלָם וָעֶד.
21a	Save Israel, your elected one,	וְשָׁמְרֵם יִשְׂרָאֵל אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל.
b	and those of the house of Jacob, your chosen one.	וְיִשְׂרָאֵל בְּחֹרֶם יְהוָה.

The structural analysis of the psalm presents a significant challenge due to the absence of explicit demarcation indicators. Despite this obstacle, the study can identify eight distinct strophes within the psalm, delineated as follows: vv. 1–2, 3–6, 7–9, 10, 11–14, 15–17a, 17b–20b, and 20c–21.

The initial strophe, comprising vv. 1–2, is characterised by the presence of synonymous parallelism and the alliteration of *א* in *אֶמְצִי*, *אֵל* and *אֶשְׁמַח*. These verses exhibit thematic and semantic coherence, primarily focusing on the supplication for divine assistance and attention.

Verses 3–6 constitute the second strophe, distinguished by the employment of imperative forms, a thematic shift, and internal thematic and semantic cohesion. The strophe is further accentuated by consistent *א*-alliteration in each colon. Syntactic unity is evidenced by the recurrent use of prohibitives, including *לֹא תִחַלֵּשׁ* ‘do not hold back’, *לֹא תִשְׁחָדֵשׁ* ‘do not destroy it’, and *לֹא תִפְתָּח* ‘do not uncover it’ in cola 4, 5 and 6, as well as imperatives such as *תִּשְׁתָּחֵלֶךְ* ‘incline’ and *תִּתֵּן* ‘give’ in v. 3, and *תִּבְנֶה* ‘build up’ in v. 5.

The third strophe, encompassing vv. 7–9, is unified by a series of semantically related terms, including *רָעָה* ‘evil/bad things’, *אֱמֶת* ‘truth’, *חַטֹּאתַי* ‘my sins’, *לֹא רָאָה* ‘is not innocent’, *חֻקְךָ* ‘your law’, and *דָּן* ‘judge/judgement’. The strophe’s syntactic cohesion is reinforced by the repetition of imperatives such as *תִּפְתָּח* ‘turn away’, *תִּשְׁמַח* ‘enable me to understand’, and *תִּלְמַד* ‘teach me’.

Verse 10 stands as an independent fourth strophe, serving as a logical consequence of the preceding strophe, primarily due to the utilisation of *וְ* as a transitional marker. The alliterative repetition of *א* and *אֵל* further highlights the strophe.

The fifth strophe in vv. 11–14 is notable for its frequent employment of the first-person singular personal pronoun, particularly at the conclusion of each colon, with the exception of v. 13a. The strophe’s cohesion is enhanced by the interplay of prohibitives and imperatives, creating syntactic parallels throughout. Phonetic features include eightfold *א*-alliteration and triple *א*-alliteration. A chiasmic structure is formed by the strategic placement of prohibitives at the end of v. 11a and the beginning of v. 14b, which also creates an inclusion in the strophe.

³⁴¹ Taylor et al. (2020, 633) underline that the intended meaning of the text remains obscure. This is because if the Pael form of the verb *מָצִי* is meant to convey the sense of “being grateful” or “giving thanks,” it would typically be accompanied by its object, *אֱלֹהֵיךָ*. However, in this instance, the verb is employed on its own. This study chooses the translation ‘cry out in complaint’.

Verses 15–17a form the sixth strophe, primarily constructed through ninefold מ -alliteration. The strophe is characterised by the inclusion of nominal clauses in cola 15a and 17a, complemented by the phrase מִלְפָּנֶיךָ ‘from before you’ in cola 15b and 17a. A chiasmus is formed by the application of מ in the words מִלְפָּנֶיךָ and מִלְפָּנֶיךָ in 15a and 17a.

The seventh strophe in vv. 17b–20b is distinguished by the prevalent use of first-person verbs, with the exception of cola 17c and 19b, resulting in subject and thematic shifts. The strophe is marked by sixfold א -alliteration and provides numerous examples of synonymous parallelism.

The final strophe in vv. 20c–21 is characterised by the use of imperatives $\text{סוּ$ and פָּסֵם at the beginning of cola 20c and 21a, signalling a thematic and subject shift. Extensive sound play with א is observed in v. 20c ($\text{אֲחַלֵּם אֶלְחַלֵּם אֶלְחַלֵּם}$) and in cola 21a–b ($\text{אֲחַלֵּם אֶלְחַלֵּם}$).³⁴² The strophe’s phonetic richness is further enhanced by unintentional end-rhyme due to the suffixes in cola 21a–b with אֶלְחַלֵּם and אֲחַלֵּם .

Regarding the overall strophic structure, Ps 155 exhibits varying numbers of cola across its strophes, with the first and fourth strophes consisting of two cola each, five cola in the third and sixth strophes, eight cola in the fifth and seventh strophes, four cola in the second strophe, and three cola in the eighth strophe.

2.2. The Hebrew text

The Hebrew text and its English translation of the psalm are following:³⁴³

I	1	Yhwh, I cried out to you, notice me.	יהוה קראתי אליכה הקשיבה אלי
	2	I spread my palms to Your Holy Abode.	פרשתי כפי למעון קודשכה
II	3	Turn your ear and give me my request.	הט אוזנכה ותזילי את שאלתי
	4	And in my request, do not turn away from me.	ובקשתי אל תמנע ממני
	5	Build up my soul and do not throw it,	בנה נפשי ואל תמגרה
	6	and do not let it go before the wicked.	ואל תפרע לפני רשעים
III	7a	May turn away from me the rewards of the evil,	גמולי הרע ישיב ממני
	b	the Judge of Truth.	דין האמת
	8a	Yhwh, do not judge me based on my sins,	יהוה אל־תשפטני כחטאתי
	b	because no one living is righteous before you.	כי לוא יצדק לפניכה כול חי
	9a	Let me understand your Torah, Yhwh,	הבינני יהוה בתורתכה
	b	and teach me from your judgments.	ואת משפטיכה למדני
	10a	And many will hear Your deeds,	וישמעו רבים מעשיכה
	b	and people glorify your glory.	ועמים יהדרו את כבודכה

³⁴² Since v. 21 is elliptic, the imperative פָּסֵם dominates also the second colon. Regarding the א -alliteration, it is partly caused by the use of preposition.

³⁴³ The source text is the Qumran scroll 11QPs^a from two editions: 1965 and Sanders 1997. The English translation is according to Mayer 2020.

IV 11a	Remember me and do not forget me,	זכורני ואל תשכחני
b	and do not bring me to what is too hard for me.	ואל תביאני בקשות ממני
12a	Take my youthful sins away from me,	חטאת נעורי הרחק ממני
b	and my iniquities do not remember me.	ופשעי אל יזכרו לי
13a	Purify me, Yhwh, from evil plague,	טהרני יהוה מנגע רע
b	and do not let it continue to return to me.	[ו] ³⁴⁴ אל יוסף לשוב אלי
14a	Dry its roots from me,	יבש שרשיו ממני
b	and let not its leaves bloom in me.	ואל ינצו ע[ל]י בי
V 15a	Honour you, Yhwh,	כבוד אתה יהוה
b	thus, my request is fulfilled before You.	על כן שאלתי מלפניכה שלמה
16a	To whom shall I cry, and will give me?	למי אזעקה ויתן לי
b	And human being – what can they do with [their] strength,	ובני אדם מה יוסיף אומ[צם]
17a	from before you, Yhwh, is my trust.	מלפ[נ]יכה יהוה מבטחי
VI 17b	I have called upon Yhwh, and he shall answer me,	קראתי יהוה ויענני
c	and he healed my broken heart.	[וירפא את] שבר לבי
18a	I dozed and slept,	נמתי [ואי]שנה
b	I dreamt and I awoke,	חלמתי גם [הקיצותי]
19a	You supported me, Yhwh.	[סמכתני יהוה]
b	And I will call upon Yhwh, my refuge.	[ואקרא יהו] ה [מפלטי]

The structural analysis of the psalm reveals evidence for at least six distinct strophes, delineated as follows: vv. 1–2, 3–6, 7–10, 11–14, 15–17a, 17b–19, and an incomplete section beginning with v. 19c. This segmentation is supported by various linguistic and thematic markers.

The initial strophe, comprising vv. 1–2, is characterised by synonymous parallelism and accentuated by *q*-alliteration. Thematically, these verses articulate a supplication for Yahweh's attention and assistance.

Verses 3–6 constitute the second strophe, exhibiting thematic and semantic cohesion. The strophe's unity is reinforced by the interplay of imperatives and prohibitives, as well as by a fivefold *n*-alliteration. Additionally, the rhythmic occurrence of the first-person suffix י at the end of many words (לי, ובקשתי, שאלתי, ממני, נפשי, לפני and נפשי) further demarcates this structural unit.

The third strophe, encompassing vv. 7–10, is primarily defined by its Torah-centric vocabulary, including notions such as רע 'evil', דין 'judge', אמת 'truth', שפט 'to judge', חטאת 'sin', צדק 'to be righteous', and תורה 'Torah'. The strophe's cohesion is further emphasised by the repetition of waw at the beginning of cola 9b, 10a, and 10b.

Verses 11–14 form the fourth strophe, distinguished by synonymous parallelism and the prevalent use of first-person singular suffixes, which finish each colon except

³⁴⁴ The reconstructed text, denoted by [] brackets, is suggested by Sanders (1997, 178–185).

13a. The strophe's vivacity is enhanced by the combination of imperatives and prohibitives. The repetition of זכר 'to remember' serves as an additional marker.

The fifth strophe, comprising vv. 15–17a, is demarcated by several features. Firstly, the imperative verb at the beginning of v. 15 functions as a transitional marker, signalling a thematic shift. Secondly, the repetition of the divine name יהוה in cola 15a and 17a creates the effect of inclusion. The nominal clauses in vv. 15a and 17a potentially reinforce this inclusion and emphasise the strophe. Additionally, the recurrence of the phrase מלפניך 'from before you' in cola 15b and 17a, along with the tenfold repetition of the consonant מ, further accentuates this structural unit.

Verses 17b–19 constitute the sixth strophe, primarily due to the repetition of the term קרא in both cola 17b and 19b, creating an inclusion effect (assuming the reconstruction is accurate). The repetition of יהוה in vv. 17b, 19a and 19b further emphasises the strophe. Moreover, the consistent use of first-person verbs serves as a structural marker.

The analysis acknowledges the incomplete nature of the psalm, noting that while a new verse or strophe begins after v. 19, its conclusion remains indeterminate due to missing text.

3. Word repetition and sound figures

The investigation reveals that the Syriac translator follows Hebrew word order strictly. Hence, ה' 'Lord' in vv. 1, 7b, 9, 13a, 15a, 17a, 17b, 18b and 19b renders יהוה, 'I cried out' in vv. 1 and 17b קראתי, 'to' in vv. 1 and 13b אלי/אליכה, which the Hebrew text uses twice in the first verse and once in v. 13b, while the Syriac rather employs ܐܝܢܝܢ instead in the first verse. It is an example in which the Syriac translator uses suitable words given the context. Notably, in this case, the translator's preference led to fewer repetitions. Likewise, 'my request' in vv. 3 and 15b renders 'שאלתי', 'before' in vv. 6, 8, 15b and 17a 'לפני', 'evil' in vv. 7a and 13a 'רע', 'judge' in vv. 7b (2x) and 9 'דין' and 'שפט'. In the latter case, the Syriac translator uses the word ܕܝܢ three times, unlike its Hebrew counterpart. The word 'my sins' in vv. 7b and 12a renders 'ܡܫܬܬܐܬܝ', 'strong' and 'honour' in vv. 10b and 15a 'ܡܠܚܬܐ', 'remember' in vv. 11a and 12b translates זכר. Some instances of word repetition can be observed: in vv. 8, 15b and 19c, the Syriac translator repeats the word ܡܠܬܐ three times, whereas the Hebrew text only employs כי once in v. 8b. This provides evidence that the Syriac translator strategically manipulates the sentence structure in order to achieve a precise level of comprehensibility in the text.

Another example of such differences between the two versions can be seen in vv. 16a and 19b, where the Syriac translator chooses to use a single root verb 'ܡܠܬܐ' 'cry out/ complain', whereas the Hebrew text utilises two separate words: 'ואקרא' and 'ואזעקה'.

The Syriac translation methodology demonstrates a sophisticated equilibrium between source-text fidelity and contextual adaptation, operating within a framework of cultural-linguistic mediation that optimises semantic transfer while maintaining textual integrity.

The presented table elucidates the frequency of repetition of Hebrew and Syriac words (since vv. 19c–21b are missing in the Hebrew version, they are entirely ignored in this comparative table).

Hebrew text	Syriac text
יהוה (1, 8a, 9a, 13a, 15a, 17a, 17b, 19a, 19b)	ܕܠܗ (1, 7b, 9, 13a, 15a, 17a, 17b, 18b, 19b)
קרא (1, 17b, 19b)	ܡܢ (1, 17b)
אלי (1 2x, 13b)	ܠܗܐܝ (1, 13b)
נתן (3, 16a)	
שאלתי (3, 15b)	ܥܠܡܐ (3, 15b)
לפני(כה) (6, 8b, 15b, 17a)	ܡܢ (6, 8, 15b, 17a)
רע (7a, 13a)	ܚܒܐ (7a, 13a)
שפט (8a, 9b)	ܕܡܢ (7b 2x, 9)
חטאתי (8a, 12a)	ܫܠܡܐ (7b, 12a)
	ܡܠܠܐ (8, 15b)
בבד (10b, 15a)	
זכר (11a, 12b)	ܕܚܐ (11a, 12b)
	ܡܠܠܐ (16a, 19a)
113 words and 33 repetitions of 11 words	120 words and 32 repetitions of 11 words

The comparative analysis of the Hebrew and Syriac versions reveals nuanced disparities in lexical repetition patterns. The quantitative assessment indicates a marginal difference in the frequency of word recurrence between the two texts. Despite this divergence, the fundamental role of lexical repetition in delineating strophic structures remains consistent in both versions. The Syriac rendition suggests a conscious effort by the translator to preserve this key stylistic feature.

In terms of sound patterns, particularly regarding alliteration, the first strophe can be identified through a limited occurrence of ܕ-alliteration in v. 1 with ܕܠܗ and ܕ and in v. 2 with ܕܚܒܐ. In the Hebrew text, there is a triple ק in vv. 1–2, which creates a small alliteration. The initial strophe shows alliterative elements in both the Hebrew and Syriac texts. Nevertheless, the Hebrew strophe employs the repetition of the consonant י seven times, which creates a dominant sound.

The second strophe of Ps 155 is distinguished by a five-fold repetition of the consonant ܕ in vv. 3–6 with ܕܠܗ, ܕܡܢ and three times ܕܠܗ. Similarly, the Hebrew version of the same strophe showcases a five-fold repetition of the consonant א as well as a triple repetition of the consonant נ, lending additional emphasis to the Hebrew strophe. The third strophe is firstly accentuated by ܕ, which is repeated six times in cola 7b (ܕܡܢ, ܕܡܢ, ܕܡܢ, ܕܡܢ, ܕܡܢ, ܕܡܢ), 8 (ܕܠܗ) and 9 (ܕܡܢ). Additionally, the four-fold repetition of ܡ in cola 7a (ܡܢ, ܡܢ, ܡܢ, ܡܢ), 7b (ܡܢ), 8 (ܡܠܠܐ) and 9 (ܡܠܠܐ)

accentuates the strophe. Last but not least, a triple $\aleph$ -alliteration in cola 7a ($\aleph\aleph\aleph$, $\aleph\aleph$), and 9 ($\aleph\aleph\aleph$) also adds to the character of the third strophe.

The third strophe of the Hebrew text shows a more intensified alliteration. Initially, the repetition of $\aleph$ and ψ in cola 7b, 8a, 9b, 10a and 10b (twice) contributes to the effect. Similarly, the four-fold repetition of $\beth$ in cola 8a, 8b (twice) and 10b, along with the repetition of γ five times in cola 7a, 8a, 8b, 9a and 9b, strengthens the alliterative pattern of the strophe. Additionally, the presence of a small triple alliteration of $\daleth$ in cola 7a, 9b and 10a further emphasises alliteration in the strophe.

The fourth strophe in the Syriac text is marked by only a minor triple alliteration of $\aleph$ and $\beth$ in v. 10, specifically with $\aleph\aleph\aleph$, $\aleph\aleph$ and $\aleph\aleph$, demonstrating the lack of rich alliterative forms. In contrast, the fourth strophe of the Hebrew text benefits from a rather extensive alliteration, including the repetition of $\aleph$ and ψ seven times in cola 11a, 11b, 12b, 13b and 14b, as well as three times γ in cola 13a, 14a and 14b and three times $\beth$ in cola 11 (twice) and 14b. Additionally, the consonant γ dominates the strophe with twenty repetitions.

The fifth strophe in the Syriac displays a plethora of alliterative structures, notably a seven-fold $\beth$ -alliteration in cola 11b with $\beth$, 12a $\beth$, 12b $\beth$, 13a $\beth$ and $\beth$, 13b $\beth$ and 14a $\beth$, as well as an eight-fold $\beth$ -repetition in cola 11a $\beth$, 11b $\beth$, 12b $\beth$ and $\beth$, 13b $\beth$, 14a $\beth$ and 14b $\beth$. The application of a triple $\beth$ -alliteration in v. 11a ($\beth\aleph\aleph$, $\beth\aleph$ and $\beth\aleph$) as well as a triple $\beth$ -alliteration in cola 11b with $\beth\aleph$, 13a $\beth$ and 14b $\beth$ greatly enhances the strophe. Moreover, the strophe is enriched by the repetition of $\aleph$ and $\beth$ three times. In contrast, the fifth strophe in the Hebrew text benefits from a five-fold $\aleph$ - and ψ -alliteration in vv. 15a, 15b and 16a and in colon 16b, and four times the repetition of γ in vv. 15a, 16a, 16b and 17a. A four-fold $\beth$ -alliteration in cola 15b and 16b and twice in 17a contributes to the richness of the strophe.

In contrast to the Hebrew strophe, the sixth strophe in the Syriac text appears to be marginally more remarkable in terms of alliterative form due to the use of a nine-fold repetition of the consonant $\beth$ in cola, including 15a $\beth$, 15b $\beth$, $\beth$, 16a $\beth$, 16b $\beth$, $\beth$ and 17a $\beth$, $\beth$. Additionally, a triple repetition of the consonants $\aleph$ and $\beth$ is found in cola 15a ($\aleph\aleph$, $\beth$) and 16a ($\beth\aleph$). On the contrary, the Hebrew strophe only features a four-fold repetition of the consonant γ in cola 17b, 17c and 19a.

The seventh strophe in the Syriac text is distinguished by a plethora of alliterative structures, which consist of a four-fold repetition of the consonant $\beth$ as well as a seven-fold $\aleph$ - and $\beth$ -alliteration in cola 17b ($\beth$), 17c ($\beth$), 18b ($\aleph$, $\beth$), 19a ($\beth$), 20a ($\aleph$) and 20b ($\beth$). Additionally, a four-fold repetition of the consonant $\beth$ in cola 17b ($\beth$), 18b($\beth$) and 19b ($\beth$, $\beth$) reinforces the strophe. The analysis of the seventh strophe in Hebrew is not possible.

In the eighth strophe, the alliterative structures of the Syriac text are poor. The strophe is characterised only by a four-fold $\aleph$ - and $\beth$ -alliteration in colon 20c. It is worth noting that the repetition of $\beth$ contributes to the dominant sound in the last strophe.

A comparative analysis of Ps 155 in its Hebrew and Syriac iterations reveals the employment of phonological literary devices, specifically alliteration and sound patterns, in both versions. However, the manifestation of these auditory elements exhibits distinct variations across strophic units. The Syriac rendition demonstrates particularly sophisticated alliterative constructions in its fifth and seventh strophes, while the Hebrew original showcases notable phonological intricacy in its third and fourth strophes. The overall assessment indicates a marginal superiority of the Syriac version utilising these phonological literary techniques.

4. Parallelism and syntax in the Syriac psalm

An analysis of Ps 155 in both its Hebrew and Syriac versions reveals complex poetic structures and translation dynamics. This examination provides insights into the compositional techniques employed in Hebrew poetry and the approach to translation in Syriac.

Parallelism: synonymous parallelism, a common feature in Hebrew poetry, is not consistently employed throughout Ps 155. The first and second strophes in both versions consist entirely of monocola, devoid of parallelism. However, in the second strophe, analysing the verses as two bicola reveals explicit parallelism. However, vv. 9 (exclusive to the Hebrew version), 11–14 and 17–18 exhibit parallelistic structures. The overall scarcity of parallelism, coupled with its syntactic inconsistency across both versions, indicates a deliberate stylistic approach.

Translation fidelity: the Syriac translation demonstrates a high degree of fidelity to the Hebrew text, particularly in preserving parallelistic structures where they occur. This adherence suggests that the Syriac translator possessed a comprehensive understanding of Hebrew poetic structures and aimed to maintain these features in translation. Preserving parallelism in the Syriac version, where it exists in Hebrew, indicates an approach to translation that prioritises both semantic and structural equivalence.

Syntactic considerations: generally, the Syriac text maintains the word order of the Hebrew original. Deviations occur primarily in instances of omission, and addition, presumably to enhance precision and comprehensibility in the target language. These modifications demonstrate the translator's commitment to balancing fidelity to the source text with the need for clarity in the target language.

Distinctive features:

1. Prohibitives and imperatives: Ps 155 is characterised by a notable frequency of prohibitive and imperative forms, contributing to its didactic or exhortative tone.
2. Unfinished acrostic: the psalm exhibits characteristics of an unfinished acrostic, a poetic device where successive units begin with consecutive alphabet letters. Interestingly, the Syriac translator either failed to recognise this feature or was unaware of its significance, as it is not preserved in the translation.

3. Chiasmus and inclusion: these poetic devices are present in both versions, attributable to the unique syntax and word order shared by the Hebrew and Syriac texts. For example:
- chiasmus: evidenced by the placement of prohibitives at the end of colon 11a and the beginning of colon 14b in the fifth Syriac strophe;
 - inclusion: manifested in several forms: a) nominal clauses in cola 15a and 17a; b) repetition of the divine name יהוה in vv. 15–17a; c) repetition of the term קרא in cola 17b and 19b.

5. Quantitative poetic analysis

The subsequent table depicts the metrical attributes of the Syriac psalm according to the Leiden edition:

Strophes	Verses	Words	Words in verses	Syllables	Syllables in verses	Colometry	Transliteration	
I	1	5	5	8	8	17	<i>Mār/yā/qṛēṭ/lwā/tāk/’a/ṣiṭ/li</i>	ܡܪܝܐ ܩܪܝܬ ܠܘܬܐ ܐܝܬܝܠܝ
	2	4	4	9	9	20	<i>peš/tet/’i/ḏay/lmed/yā/rē/dquḏ/šāk</i>	ܩܥܬܐ ܕܝܬܐ ܠܚܡܝܐ ܕܡܥܕܝܬܐ
II	3	5	5	8	8	18	<i>’ar/ken/’ed/nāk/whab/ li/šē/laṭ</i>	ܐܪܝܬܝܢ ܕܡܥܬܐ ܠܐ ܥܪܝܬܝܢ
	4	4	4	6	6	14	<i>Bā/’ut/lā/ teḵ/lē/ men</i>	ܒܥܬܐ ܠܐ ܬܚܝܬ ܠܝܢ
	5	4	4	5	5	18	<i>Bnih/ lnaṣ/wlā/ṭahr/hēh</i>	ܒܢܝܬ ܠܢܥܫ ܠܐ ܬܚܝܬ
	6	4	4	7	7	16	<i>Wlā/tey/lēh/qḏām/raš/’i/’ē</i>	ܠܐ ܬܚܝܬ ܠܝܢ ܕܡܥܬܐ
III	7a	4	11	7	20	16	<i>Pār/’ay/biṣ/tā/’ah/peḵ/men</i>	ܦܐܪܝܬܝܢ ܕܡܥܬܐ ܠܝܢ
	b	7		13		30	<i>ḏay/yā/nā/dquṣ/tā/ Mār/yā/lā/ ṭdu/nayn/’ak/hṭā/hay</i>	ܕܢܝܬܐ ܕܡܥܬܐ ܠܝܢ ܕܡܥܬܐ ܠܝܢ
	8	6	6	9	9	19	<i>meṭ/ṭul/dlā/zā/kē/qḏā/mayk/kol/dhay</i>	ܡܥܬܐ ܕܝܬܐ ܕܡܥܬܐ ܠܝܢ
	9	5	5	13	13	27	<i>Sak/ke/layn/mār/yā/nā/mo/sāk/wḏi /nayk/’al/le/fayn</i>	ܣܬܝܬܐ ܕܡܥܬܐ ܕܡܥܬܐ ܠܝܢ
								ܠܝܢ
IV	10a	3	6	7	14	17	<i>Dneš/m’un/sag/gi/ē/’hā/ḏayk</i>	ܕܢܝܬܐ ܕܡܥܬܐ ܠܝܢ
	b	3		7		16	<i>w’am/mē/naw/don/li/qā/rāk</i>	ܠܝܢ ܕܡܥܬܐ ܠܝܢ
V	11a	3	7	6	12	17	<i>Et/daḵ/rayn/wlā/te/ṭ’ēn</i>	ܐܬܝܬܝܬܝܢ ܠܝܢ ܕܡܥܬܐ
	b	4		6		17	<i>wlā/ ṭa/’lan/bḏaq/šēn/ men</i>	ܠܝܢ ܕܡܥܬܐ ܠܝܢ
	12a	4	8	7	14	18	<i>Hṭā/hē/ḏtal/yuṭ/’a/’bar/ men</i>	ܬܚܝܬܝܢ ܕܡܥܬܐ ܠܝܢ
	b	4		7		16	<i>wmā/ru/ḏuṭ/ lā/ teḡ/kar/ lī</i>	ܠܝܢ ܕܡܥܬܐ ܠܝܢ

13a	5	9	9	16	18	<i>Dak/kān/mār/yā/men/gar/hā/bi/šā</i>	تدبر دتار جی دتار دتار
b	4		7		17	<i>wlā/naw/sef/lmah/pā/ku/twā</i>	هله نههه لخنهه لههه
14a	3	7	6	12	12	<i>Yab/beš/'eq/qā/rāw/ men</i>	نجر حمتار حبر
b	4		6		17	<i>wlā/nef/r'un/ṭar/pāw/ bī</i>	هله نههه لخنهه لههه
VI 15a	4	10	8	20	16	<i>'aš/šī/nā/wrab/bā/ 'at/ mār/yā</i>	حمتار دتار دتار
b	6		12		25	<i>meṭ/ṭul/hā/kan/šē/laṭ/men/qdā/ mayk/ meš/tam/lyā</i>	جلا دتار دتار جی مدحی
16a	4	8	6	16	14	<i>Lman/ 'eq/bol/ wnet/tel/ lī</i>	لخ نهههه هلهه له
b	4		10		20	<i>wab/nay/nā/šā/mā/nā/maw/sef/hayl/hon</i>	هلههه دتار نهههه سلنهه
17a	4	4	7	7	17	<i>Men/qdā/mayk/mār/yā/ṭuk/lān</i>	جی مدحی دتار نهههه
VII 17b	3	6	5	11	14	<i>Qrēṭ/lmār/yā/wa 'nān</i>	قنهه لخنهه حبر
c	3		6		13	<i>was/si/laṭ/hā/rā/ dleb</i>	هلهه لهههه دتار
18a	2	7	4	15	8	<i>Nā/meṭ/wḡem/keṭ</i>	نخنه نهههه
b	5		11		24	<i>hel/meṭ' āf' ett' 'i/reṭ/was/maḡ/tān/ mār/yā</i>	نخنهه ره نههههه نههههه
19a	1	4	3	9	5	<i>weq/qab/bel</i>	هلههه
b	3		6		13	<i>meṭ/ṭul/dfaš/yan/mār/yā</i>	جلا دهه نهههه
20a	3	7	7	13	14	<i>'eh/zē/ hā/šā/bēh/taṭ/hōn</i>	هلههه نهههه نهههه
b	4		6		13	<i>sab/reṭ/bāḡ/wlā' eb/haṭ</i>	هلههه نههه نهههه
VIII 20c	5	5	11	11	21	<i>Hab/'i/qā/rā/l' ā/lam/wal/' ā/lam/ 'āl/min</i>	هه نههه نهههه نهههه نهههه
21a	3	6	6	12	14	<i>Proq/ lis/rā/yēl/gab/yāḡ</i>	هلهه لهههه نهههه
b	3		6		16	<i>wlaḡ/hēṭ/ ya 'qob/ bḡi/rāḡ</i>	هلههه نهههه نهههه

The versification analysis of Ps 155, based on the Syriac text of the Leiden edition, reveals a complex structural composition comprising eight monocola, eleven bicola and two tricola. This structure is further delineated into eight distinct strophes, each characterised by unique syllabic and lexical patterns.

Strophe 1 (vv. 1–2) consists of two monocola, with 8 and 9 syllables, and 5 and 4 words, respectively. Strophe 2 (vv. 3–6) is composed of four monocola, exhibiting syllable counts of 8, 6, 5 and 7, and word counts of 5, 4, 4 and 4, respectively.

Strophe 3 (vv. 7–9) presents a more varied structure, with a bicolon in v. 7 with syllable counts of 7 and word counts of 11 and two monocola in vv. 8, 9 with 9 syllables, 6 words, 13 syllables, 5 words, respectively. If vv. 8 and 9 are considered a single bicolon, the overall syllable and word count balance v. 7, maintaining proportions of 22:11 and 20:11, respectively. Strophe 4 (v. 10) consists of a single bicolon with 14 syllables and 6 words.

Strophe 5 (vv. 11–14) is composed of four bicola, with syllable counts of 12, 14, 16 and 12, and word counts of 7, 8, 9 and 7, respectively. Strophe 6 (vv. 15–17a) comprises two bicola (vv. 15–16) with syllable counts of 20 and 16, and word counts of 10 and 8, followed by a monocolon (v. 17a) with 7 syllables and 4 words.

Strophe 7 (vv. 17b–20b) consists of four bicola, with syllable arrangement of 11, 15, 9 and 13 and word arrangement of 6, 7, 4 and 7. The final strophe (vv. 20c–21) contains a monocolon (v. 20c) with 11 syllables and 5 words, and a bicolon (v. 21) with 12 syllables and 6 words.

The overall syllabic range per colon spans from 3 to 13, while the word count range is 1 to 6. The Syriac text totals 267 syllables distributed across 37 cola, yielding an average of 7.21 syllables per colon.

Regarding colometry, the analysis indicates that the psalm lacks complete balance in terms of consonantal length. However, a state of balance is observed within specific verses: 10 (17:16), 11 (17:17), 12 (18:16), 13 (18:17), and 21 (14:16).

The following table provides the results of calculating the number of syllables, words and consonants in each strophe:

Strophes	Verses	Syllables	Words	Colometry
I	1–2	17	9	37
II	3–6	26	17	66
III	7–9	42	22	92
IV	10	14	6	33
V	11–14	54	31	132
VI	15–17a	43	22	92
VII	17b–20b	48	24	104
VIII	20c–21	23	11	51

The structural analysis of Ps 155 reveals intricate patterns of balance and variation across its strophes, as evidenced by syllabic counts, word ratios and colometrical arrangements.

Syllabic balance: the psalm exhibits a tripartite syllabic balance among its strophes. Specifically, the first and fourth strophes, the second and eighth strophes, and the third and sixth strophes demonstrate balanced syllabic counts. This symmetry suggests a deliberate structuring of the psalm’s phonetic elements, potentially influencing its rhythmic recitation and auditory impact.

Word count balance: a similar tripartite balance is observed in the word count ratios across the strophes. The first, fourth and eighth strophes present a small ratio of 9:6:11 compared to other strophes, while the third, sixth and seventh strophes show a ratio of 22:22:24. This lexical balance complements the syllabic symmetry, further reinforcing the psalm’s structural cohesion.

Colometrical balance: in terms of colometry, only the third and sixth strophes demonstrate a balanced structure. This limited colometrical balance suggests a more fluid approach to line arrangement within the overall composition.

The psalm employs a heterosyllabic metrical pattern, a significant departure from the isosyllabic metrical pattern characteristic of classical Syriac poetry. The psalm’s structure is further characterised by strophes containing varying numbers of cola.

The following table showcases the tally of syllables and words in each colon and verse of the Hebrew text. Additionally, the results of the colometrical analysis are presented.

Strophes	Verses	Words	Words in verses	Syllables	Syllables in verses	Colometry		
I	1	5	5	13	13	23	יה/וה/ק/רא/תי/א/לי/בה/הק/שי/בה/א/לי	יהוה קראתי אליכה הקשיבה אלי
	2	4	4	10	10	19	פ/רש/תי/כפ/פי/למ/עון/קוד/ש/כה	פרשתי כפי למעון קודשכה
II	3	6	6	12	12	20	הט/אוז/נ/כה/ו/תן/לי/את/ש/א/ל/תי	הט אוזנכה ותן לי את שאלתי
	4	4	4	11	11	16	ו/בק/ק/ש/תי/אל/תמ/נע/ממ/מנ/ני	ובקשתי אל תמנע ממני
	5	4	4	9	9	15	ב/נה/נפ/שי/ו/אל/ת/מג/רה	בנה נפשי ואל תמגרה
	6	4	4	9	9	16	ו/אל/תפ/רע/לפ/ני/ר/ש/עים	ואל תפרע לפני רשעים
III	7a	4	6	10	15	16	ג/מו/לי/ה/רע/י/שיב/ממ/מנ/ני	גמולי הרע ישיב ממני
	b	2		5		7	די/ז/ה/א/מת	דין האמת
	8a	4	10	11	21	18	יה/וה/אל/תש/פ/ט/ני/כ/חט/טא/תי	יהוה אל תשפטני כחטאתי
	b	6		10		20	כי/לוא/יצ/דק/ל/פ/ני/כה/כול/חי	כי לוא יצדק לפניכה כול חי
	9a	3	6	11	20	17	ה/בי/נ/ני/יה/וה/ב/תו/ר/ת/כה	הבינני יהוה בתורתכה
	b	3		9		15	ו/את/מש/פ/טי/כה/למ/ד/ני	ואת משפטיכה למדני
	10a	3	7	10	22	16	ו/יש/מ/עו/רב/ביס/מ/ע/שי/כה	וישמעו רבים מעשיכה
	b	4		12		18	ו/עמ/מיס/יה/דרו/את/כ/בו/ד/כה	ועמים יהדרו את כבודכה
IV	11a	3	7	10	22	15	ז/כו/ר/ני/ו/אל/תש/כ/ח/ני	זכורני ואל תשכחני
	b	4		12		18	ו/אל/ת/בי/א/ני/ב/ק/שות/ממ/מנ/ני	ואל תביאני בקשות ממני
	12a	4	8	10	18	17	חט/טאת/נ/עו/רי/הר/חק/ממ/מנ/ני	חטאת נעורי הרחק ממני
	b	4		8		14	ופ/ש/עי/אל/ז/כ/רו/לי	ופשעי אל יזכרו לי
	13a	4	8	10	19	15	ט/ה/ר/ני/יה/וה/מנ/נ/גע/רע	טהרני יהוה מנגע רע
	b	4		9		14	ו/אל/ז/ס/ף/ל/שוב/א/לי	[ו]אל יוסף לשוב אלי
	14a	3	7	8	16	12	י/בש/ש/ר/שיו/ממ/מנ/ני	יבש שרשיו ממני
	b	4		8		13	ו/אל/י/נצ/צו/ע/ליו/בי	ואל ינצו ע[ל]י בי
V	15a	3	8	6	19	11	כ/בוד/את/תה/יה/וה	כבוד אתה יהוה
	b	5		13		20	על/כן/ש/א/ל/תי/מל/לפ/ני/כה/ש/ל/מה	על כן שאלתי מלפניכה שלמה
	16a	4	9	9	19	14	ל/מי/אז/ע/קה/ו/ית/תן/לי	למי אזעקה ויתן לי
	b	5		10		19	וב/ני/א/דס/מה/זו/סיף/אז/מ/צם	ובני אדם מה יסיף אומ[צם]
	17a	3	3	9	9	16	מל/לפ/ני/כה/יה/וה/מב/ט/חי	מלפ[נ]יכה יהוה מבטחי

VI 17b	3	7	10	18	15	ק/רא/תי/יה/וה/וי/ע/ג/ני	קראתי יהוה ויענני
c	4		8		13	וי/יר/פא/את/ש/בר/לב/בי	[וירפא את] שבר לבי
18a	2	5	6	14	10	נמ/תי/ו/אי/ש/נה	נמתי [ואי]שנה
b	3		8		14	ח/למ/תי/גם/ה/קי/צו/תי	חלמתי גם [הקיצותי]
19a	2	2	6	6	10	ס/מכ/ח/ני/יה/וה	[סמכתי יהוה]
b	3	3	9	9	14	ו/אק/רא/יה/וה/מ/פ/ל/טי	[ואקרא יהו] ה [מפלטי]

The colometrical analysis of the Hebrew text of Ps 155 reveals a complex structure with varying degrees of balance. This analysis provides insights into the psalm's composition and its relationship to the Syriac version.

The psalm demonstrates an overall lack of colometrical balance, particularly evident in the first and second strophes (vv. 1–6), which consist of monocola. This imbalance is further exemplified in vv. 7, 15, 16, 18 and 19, which exhibit notably uneven colometrical ratios of 16:7, 11:20, 14:19, 10:14, and 10:14 consonants, respectively. The word count per colon varies from two to six, contributing to this imbalance.

Interestingly, when regarding the monocola in the second strophes as two bicola, the syllable counts appear to achieve balance ($8+6=14$, $5+7=12$). This suggests a potential underlying rhythmic structure that is not immediately apparent in the colometrical analysis.

Both the Hebrew and Syriac texts lack significant colometrical balance. However, the syllabic arrangement in the Hebrew text appears more advantageous, with a broader range of syllables per colon compared to the Syriac version.

The first strophe contains 9 words and 23 syllables, while the second strophe has 18 words and 41 syllables. The third strophe features 29 words and 78 syllables, and the fourth strophe consists of 30 words and 75 syllables. The fifth strophe includes 20 words and 47 syllables, and the sixth strophe has 17 words and 47 syllables. Notably, the third, fifth and sixth strophes exhibit complete balance in both syllable and word counts. Additionally, the second, fifth and sixth strophes demonstrate a balanced word count ratio of 18:20:17.

The syllable range per colon is between 5 and 13, while the word range per colon varies from 2 to 6. The total number of syllables is 311, spread across 33 cola, with an average of 9.42 syllables per cola.

The consonantal analysis reveals that the first strophe contains 38 consonants, and the second strophe has 35 consonants. The third strophe contains 110 consonants, while the fourth strophe has 117 consonants. The fifth strophe includes 78 consonants, and the sixth strophe has 76 consonants. The analysis reveals a colometrical balance between the first and second strophes (38:35 consonants) and between the fifth and sixth strophes (78:76 consonants).

This comprehensive analysis of the Hebrew Ps 155 reveals a multifaceted structure with varying degrees of balance across different linguistic elements. The psalm lacks overall significant colometrical balance, particularly in its initial strophes, yet demonstrates intriguing patterns of syllabic and word count balance when examined at the strophic level. The comparison with the Syriac text highlights

similarities in colometrical imbalance but suggests potential differences in syllabic arrangement.

6. Conclusion

Based on the provided text, the Syriac translator of Ps 155 relies on a variety of implicit linguistic and stylistic features to create structural divisions within the text. The poetic structure in both versions of Ps 155 exhibits greater compositional freedom, a characteristic potentially attributable to its later dating. These markers include thematic shifts, changes in grammatical constructions, phonetic devices and semantic relationships. Specifically, the strophes are distinguished by elements such as synonymous parallelism, alliteration (particularly with letters like Δ , ܐ and ܠ), thematic coherence, syntactic unity through the use of specific verb forms (imperatives and prohibitives), semantic field cohesion, transitional particles (like ܐܝܢ), pronoun usage patterns, and chiasmic structures. The translator also employs phonetic features like sound play and unintentional end rhyme to enhance the distinctiveness of each strophe.

The Syriac translation of the Hebrew psalm demonstrates a source-oriented approach, leveraging the linguistic affinity between Syriac and Hebrew as Semitic languages. This proximity facilitates a close replication of Hebrew verb tenses and root structures in the Syriac rendition. The research indicates a high degree of fidelity to the Hebrew word order, suggesting the translator's profound comprehension of the source text. This approach resulted in a translation that balances faithfulness to the original with aesthetic merit.

The Syriac version exhibits a rich array of poetic devices, mirroring those employed in Hebrew scribal traditions. These include parallelism, word repetition, alliteration, inclusion, chiasmus and strophic markings. However, the Syriac translator's application of these features demonstrates a degree of autonomy, resulting in a distinct interpretation of the Hebrew text. This creative adaptation suggests a sophisticated understanding of poetic conventions in both languages.

While parallelism is not particularly prominent in either text, the Syriac translation demonstrates a more pronounced use of alliteration and word repetition. The translator appears to have capitalised on opportunities for word repetition and employed alliterative techniques more extensively than the Hebrew original. Both texts utilise specific sound patterns, with the Syriac version exhibiting a more pronounced phonetic structure, contributing to its enhanced rhythmic and aesthetic qualities.

From a metrical perspective, both versions frequently employ monocola while maintaining a balanced colometry. However, the Hebrew psalm demonstrates a greater emphasis on colometrical structure. The Hebrew text's syllabic pattern exhibits more consistency than its colometry, potentially serving as a key indicator of its metrical structure. In contrast, the Syriac version relies on syllabic counting to

establish its metrical pattern, resulting in strophes with varying numbers of cola and a heterosyllabic metrical scheme.

While the findings indicate that the metrical patterns and strophic structures are not entirely congruent with those found in classical Syriac poetry, they share features such as lexical repetition, thematic coherence, parallelism and occasional rhythmic and isosyllabic patterns. These similarities suggest a potential connection between the structure of P-Ps and characteristics observed in classical Syriac poetry.

Quantitative analysis reveals that the Syriac text averages 7.21 syllables per colon. The Hebrew psalm, conversely, has an average of 9.42 syllables per colon. The Syriac version demonstrates a marginally lower frequency than the typical psalmic average, corresponding to patterns observed in Ps 146 and 120, while the Hebrew text exhibits a slightly elevated frequency relative to the normative range, paralleling the patterns found in Ps 8 and 96. This disparity in syllabic density and cola distribution further underscores the distinct metrical approaches employed in each version.

CHAPTER ELEVEN: THE POETIC PROFILE OF THE SYRIAC PSALM TRANSLATION ON THE BACKDROP OF HEBREW PSALM POETRY

1. Strophic structure

As a result of our research, we can maintain that the P-Ps we have studied are organised into smaller units, which we call strophes. They serve to facilitate the hearing and comprehension of the poem. The phenomenon basically follows the idea of strophic structures in the Hebrew psalms, and the strophes can have the same length in both versions, but the Syriac strophes do not precisely copy the Hebrew strophes.³⁴⁵

Through a thorough examination of the strophic divisions present in selected psalms, the author revealed recurring patterns, regularities, and structural components that enhance comprehension of the organisation and composition of these ancient Hebrew and Syriac poems, admitting the fact that there is no consistent and fixed formula for dividing psalms into strophes. The study's findings have discerned particular markers, which serve to delimit strophes within the psalms. The markers manifest themselves within the intricate framework of the psalms' structure, the essence of their content, and the distinctiveness of their artistic style. An analysis of psalms' strophes in Syriac suggests that word repetition, alliteration, inclusion, chiasmus, closure, syntactic structure, word pairs, thematic and subject shift matters, thematic and semantic correlation and parallelism are all critical factors that influence strophes. Their functions and utilisation have resulted in Syriac psalm strophes developing their own characteristics and conventions. This study was conducted on a limited sample size and may not represent the more significant proportion; however, the tendency of strophic structures seems clear.

Strophic markers employed in Syriac psalms we have studied are the following: word repetition, thematic and semantic correlation, thematic shifts, and alliteration were observed in all psalms; additionally, word pairs (Ps 8, 19, 29, 124, 146), inclusion (Ps 29, 86, 120, 146, 155), parallelism (Ps 29, 96, 146, 155), syntactical structures (Ps 19, 29, 146), and closure (Ps 19, 96) marked the strophes. As a result, it is worth mentioning that word pairs, parallelism, word repetition, and sound figures, especially alliteration, contribute significantly to the understanding of strophic markers in the psalms. These poetic phenomena, encompassing closure, inclusion, and chiasmic structure, are regarded as of utmost significance in delineating strophic divisions.

In the following, a selection of examples showcasing how strophic markers outline the strophes will be presented. In Ps 8, vv. 8–10 build the fourth strophe

³⁴⁵ For a comprehensive examination of methodology and the structural principles governing Biblical Hebrew poetic compositions, consult the introductory chapter of this study.

because of a remarkable list of word pairs, including sheep and cattle, field animals, birds of the sky and sea fishes. Psalm 19 has a particular strophe right at the beginning, in vv. 2–5b, which is characterised by the relatively frequent ܡ -alliteration (nine times) and a remarkable set of word pairs ܫܡܝܐ ‘heaven’ in v. 2a / ܪܩܝܥܐ ‘firmament’ in v. 2b, ܐܪܥܐ ‘earth’ in v. 5a / ܕܢܗܐܪ ‘world’ in v. 5b, ܝܘܡܐ ‘day’ in v. 3a / ܠܝܠܐ ‘night’ in v. 3b, and the repetition of the words ܕܡܝܢ in vv. 3, 4a and ܕܥܠ in vv. 4a, 5b. In Ps 29, vv. 3–4 form the second strophe because of the repetition of ܕܡܝܢ ‘the voice of the Lord’ at the beginning of vv. 3 and 4 on the one hand, and the repetition of words ܕܡܝܢ in cola 3a, 3c and 4, ܕܡܝܢ ‘the Lord is over the waters’ in cola 3a and 3c, adjectives from the verbal root ܥܕܕ ‘glorious’ in cola 3b and 4 on the other hand. The first strophe of Ps 86, in vv. 1–6, intensively applies the repetition of words, such as ܕܡܝܢ ‘Lord’ in cola 1a, 3a, 4b, 5a and 6a; ܕܡܝܢ ‘for’ in cola 1b, 2a, 3b, 4b and 5a; ܕܡܝܢ ‘soul’ in cola 2a, 4a and 4b; ܕܡܝܢ ‘good’ 2a and 5a; ܕܡܝܢ ‘cry out’ in cola 3b and 5b; ܕܡܝܢ ‘your servant’ in cola 2b and 4a. In Ps 96, vv. 1–3 showcase a robust syntactic structure in order to form the first strophe; the cola 1a, 1b and 2a are marked systematically and frequently by the imperative verb ܥܕܕ ‘praise’ followed by three direct objects, namely ܕܡܝܢ (1a, 1b, 2a) and ܕܡܝܢ (1a); in cola 2b and 3a, the verbs ܕܡܝܢ ‘to declare’ and ܕܡܝܢ ‘to relate’ are conjoined with the direct object and in v. 3a with a prepositional phrase. Verse 4 in Ps 120 forms the second strophe, which is characterised by the occasional alliteration of ܕܡܝܢ . This particular strophic unit exhibits a distinctive structural characteristic that remains unparalleled throughout the remainder of the psalm’s composition. The third strophe of Ps 124, in vv. 4–5, is formed by such words as ܕܡܝܢ , repeated in vv. 4a and 5, ܕܡܝܢ in vv. 4b and 5, ܕܡܝܢ in vv. 4b and 5. Additionally, ܕܡܝܢ in cola 4a and 5 causes inclusion to punctuate the strophe. Moreover, these verses are entirely related to each other thematically and semantically. In Ps 146, vv. 1–2 form the first strophe mainly because of the synonymous parallelism, which is remarkable within the verses. In Ps 155, vv. 17b–20b build up the seventh strophe owing to the frequent use of the first-person verbs throughout, except cola 17c, 18b and 19b; the strophe is also marked by the sixfold ܕܡܝܢ -alliteration, which underlines the repetition of certain sounds in the text.

The analysis revealed instances wherein certain features, namely inclusion, chiasmus, and closure, served to accentuate the strophes. A few examples will be listed here to illustrate the phenomena. In Ps 155, the fifth strophe (vv. 11–14) is marked by the strategic placement of prohibitives at the end of colon 11a and at the beginning of colon 14b, which can be considered both as chiasmus and inclusion; and the sixth strophe (vv. 15–17a) serves as an example of an explicit inclusion by nominal clauses in cola 15a and 17a. Similarly, in Ps 29, the presence of ܕܡܝܢ ‘the voice of the Lord’ in cola 3a and 4 effectively shaped the second strophe. Verses 13–15 in Ps 86 are framed by the inclusion of the word pair ܕܡܝܢ ‘grace’ and ܕܡܝܢ ‘be abundant’. In Ps 96, colon 9b, with its different syntax, seems to play the role of a closure in the strophe vv. 7–9, otherwise, consisting of imperative clauses.

There is evidence that the Syriac translator was familiar with the idea of strophic markers in Hebrew, but he used them slightly differently. An illustrative instance can

be found in vv. 3–4 of Ps 29, which constitute the second strophe in both versions. These verses employ identical strophic markers, such as word repetition in cola 3a, 4a and 4b (referring to the voice of the Lord), and employ inclusive structures accompanied by synonymous parallelism. Contrasting this, a different strophic marker can be observed in v. 4 of Ps 120, where the Syriac translator employs alliteration of the letter ܐ, while the Hebrew counterpart stands out not through alliteration, but through its distinct theme or subject matter that makes it separate from surrounding verses. Additionally, the end rhyme in words such as ܪܬܡܝܡ ‘sharp,’ ܥܡ ‘with’ and ܫܢܘܝܝܡ ‘juniper’ adds to its remarkable nature. As a result, the poetic artistry of the Syriac strophe is further enhanced, allowing the translation to stand on its own as a work of art.

Even though it is impossible to determine how many verses or cola usually comprise a strophe, it should be noted that strophes range from 1 to 12 cola. A Syriac strophe with the highest number of cola comes from Ps 86 (the first strophe with 12 cola), while the lowest number of cola is primarily represented in the last strophe of Ps 8 (a monocolon), accompanied by strophes consisting of two cola in the second strophe of Ps 120, the first strophe of Ps 124, the fourth strophe of Ps 146 and the first and fourth strophes of Ps 155. However, there exists an inclination to maintain a specific quantity of cola within strophes, such as those exhibiting a pattern of either 4, 5 or 8 cola. For instance, a tendency to use four cola can be observed in the first and second strophes of Ps 8, in the whole of the first, second, third and fifth strophes of Ps 29, the fifth strophe of Ps 96, the second and third strophes of Ps 146 and the second strophe of Ps 155. Strophes with five cola each are represented by the fourth strophe in Ps 8, the fifth strophe in Ps 29, the fourth strophe in Ps 86, the third strophe in Ps 120, the fourth strophe in Ps 124, the fifth strophe in Ps 146, and the third and sixth strophes in Ps 55. Eight cola as the length of a strophe appears in the first and third strophes of Ps 19 and the eighth strophe of Ps 155.

It is worth noting that Ps 29 and Ps 96 possess the most regular and consistent strophic structures compared to other psalms. Psalm 29 has three tetracola and one pentacolon as strophes, and Ps 96 includes three strophes, each containing three bicola, additionally two strophes with tricola and one with a tetracolon. Both psalms are the most outstanding examples of hymns in our study.

If we compare the results to the Hebrew psalms, the number of cola there ranges from 2 to 16. The third strophe of Ps 19, with 16 cola contains the highest amount of cola, and the lowest number of cola is found in the first and sixth strophes of Ps 8 and the second strophe of Ps 120, both having only two cola. As already indicated, the Syriac textual tradition exhibits a quantitative range of 1 to 12 cola per strophic unit.

This study has demonstrated that there is no consistent or regular system of strophic markers that can be uniformly applied to delineate strophes across all psalms. Instead, a diverse array of strophic markers is employed, with different markers serving to demarcate strophes in various contexts. Furthermore, the findings of this research conclusively show that although P-Ps do not adhere to a strict pattern of regular, consistent number of cola within strophes, the analysis reveals that the Syriac verses tend toward a balanced strophic structure. For instance, in Ps 29, all

strophes contain four cola except for the fifth strophe, which has five cola. In Ps 96, the first three strophes each have six cola, while in Ps 8, the first two strophes consist of four cola each.

2. Word repetition

Based on our survey, word repetition in both the P-Ps and MT text serves two purposes: demarcating strophes and functioning as an instrumental tool to enhance the aesthetic appeal of the texts.³⁴⁶ However, the distribution of this poetic feature within strophes in psalms differs in the Syriac and Hebrew versions. To put it differently, word repetition deviates somewhat from the precise alignment with the Hebrew text in specific locations. The analysis reveals the following patterns:³⁴⁷

Psalm 8 in the Syriac text consists of 69 words with 31 repetitions of 12 words, while its Hebrew counterpart contains 72 words with 29 repetitions of 12 words.

Psalm 19 displays 140 words with 48 repetitions of 15 words, whereas its Hebrew counterpart has 123 words with 35 repetitions of 13 words.

Psalm 29 has 88 words with 50 repetitions of 13 words, while its Hebrew counterpart comprises 89 words with 57 repetitions of 16 words.

Psalm 86 contains 149 words with 81 repetitions of 21 words, while its Hebrew counterpart features 145 words with 81 repetitions of 24 words.

Psalm 96 consists of 112 words with 60 repetitions of 16 words, whereas the Hebrew text has 112 words with 59 repetitions of 16 words.

Psalm 120 has 49 words with 16 repetitions of 8 words, while the Hebrew text contains 49 words with 17 repetitions of 8 words.

Psalm 124 exhibits 58 words with 20 repetitions of 10 words, while the Hebrew text consists of 55 words with 18 repetitions of 8 words.

Psalm 146 has 81 words with 27 repetitions of 9 words, whereas its Hebrew counterpart contains 80 words with 22 repetitions of 7 words.

Psalm 155 contains 120 words with 32 repetitions of 11 words, while the Hebrew text comprises 113 words with 33 repetitions of 11 words.

Consequently, the statistical analysis demonstrates the following trends: Ps 86 shows an equal number of repetitions in both the Syriac and Hebrew texts. Psalms 8, 19, 96, 124 and 146 indicate the superiority of the Syriac versions in terms of word repetitions. Psalms 29, 120 and 155 showcase the Hebrew texts excelling in the number of word repetitions. Overall, both the Syriac and Hebrew psalm texts exhibit a similar number of word repetitions.

³⁴⁶ Van Peursen (2016, 63) believes that from a translation methodological standpoint, word repetition may be characterised as a tendency to homogenise terminology across a broader segment. In literary analysis, it is seen as a strategy to enhance the coherence of a work.

³⁴⁷ Van Peursen (2016, 67) states that we can infer that one of the most prominent poetic features in Syriac is repetition, which typically results from the translator's approach to managing lexical variations in the original text.

The superiority of Syriac word repetition observed in Ps 8, 96 and 146 can be attributed to the translation technique employed by P-Ps translator and the style of P. The Syriac translator strived for a dynamic translation rather than reflecting each detail of the Hebrew text; therefore, P-Ps are free to choose appropriate words and phrases, including or omitting certain elements, based on the context and nature of the Syriac language.

In highlighting strophes, the repetition of words definitively plays the same role in the Syriac text as in the Hebrew text. In the framework of one psalm, the distribution of repeated words can be rather different.³⁴⁸

In Ps 120, for example, the first and third strophes are more strongly marked by word repetition than the second: in vv. 2c and 3b, ܠܥܠܡ ܕܥܠܡ are twice repeated, so that they symmetrically answer to the double ܠܚܝܬ in vv. 1a and 2a. In vv. 5–7 of the third strophe, several repetitions appear, such as the waw copula at the beginning of vv. 5b, 7a and 7b, the preposition ܡܝܬ ʿwithʼ in vv. 6a, 7b, and ܐܠܡܐ ʿpeaceʼ in vv. 6a and 7a.

In some cases, the Syriac translator was willing to use a single word to translate two different Hebrew words.³⁴⁹ For instance, the Syriac translator used ܡܕܡܐ ʿhe who demonstratesʼ in Ps 19:2–3, while the Hebrew text employs two different words מַגִּיד and יְחִיד, which both have the connotation ‘to show, declare’ (see more examples in Ps 8:2; 19:9; 29:4, 11; 96; 146:4, 6; 155:16, 19). This characteristic is not derived from the Hebrew text but adheres to an Aramaic/Syriac poetic tradition.³⁵⁰ Van Peursen believes that this type of repetition creates repetitive parallelism.³⁵¹ However, as revealed in this study, the Syriac translator also rendered a single Hebrew word with several Syriac equivalents. In Ps 96 and 155, the translator replaced the Hebrew word כְּבוֹד ‘glory’ with two different words: in Ps 96, v. 8b with ܡܕܡܐ, in 155:10 with ܕܡܝܬܐ ʿhonourʼ, and in 155:15 with two other adjectives ܡܕܡܐ ܡܕܡܐ ʿstrong and greatʼ.³⁵² Likewise, it happens in Ps 96:13a–b, where

³⁴⁸ Greenfield (1979, 47) states that the use of repetition in parallel lines is a hallmark of the Aramaic-Syriac poetic tradition.

³⁴⁹ Van Peursen (2016, 63) states that it is common for words or phrases to be repeated in places where Hebrew uses different terms.

³⁵⁰ Ibid.

³⁵¹ Ibid, 66.

³⁵² P-Ps replaces the Hebrew word כְּבוֹד ‘glory’ with different words, in Ps 19:2 and 29:2 ܡܕܡܐ meaning ‘praise, glory’, in Ps 155:10 with ܕܡܝܬܐ ‘honour’, Ps 155:15 with two other adjectives ܡܕܡܐ ܡܕܡܐ ‘strong and great’ and in Ps 29:1, 3, 9 with ܡܕܡܐ. The Hebrew word כְּבוֹד has been altogether translated into Syriac in Ps 3:4; 4:3; 8:6; 16:9; 21:6; 24:7, 8, 9, 10; 26:8; 29:1, 2, 3; 30:13; 49:17; 66:2; 85:10; 96:7; 104:31; 115:1; 138:5; 145:5. Among them, the Syriac translator uses the word ܡܕܡܐ in Ps 3; 4; 8; 9; 24; 29:2; 49; 66; 85; 79; 115; 138; 155:10, the word ܡܕܡܐ in Ps 21; 26; 29:1, 3; 30; 96; 104; and the word ܡܕܡܐ in Ps 145 and 155:15. Consequently, it appears that the Syriac translator employed diverse lexical alternatives to convey the meaning of a singular Hebrew word, thereby showcasing the expansive breadth of the Syriac vocabulary. This selection demonstrates the approach of choosing the most fitting word for the context.

the Syriac translator uses ܠܐܠ in order to translate אלה and omits the respective word once (see further examples of the same phenomena in Ps 19:4, 5; 29:1, 11, 2, 4; 124:7; 155:3, 16).

In conclusion, despite occasional inclinations within P-Ps to introduce or exclude elements, leading to variations in the word repetition ratio, the Syriac text generally demonstrates an equitable proportion of word repetition, which plays a significant role as a strophic marker when compared to the Hebrew text.

3. Sound figures

3.1. Alliteration

We have defined alliteration as the repetition of the initial consonants of words. The results of this study indicate that P-Ps exhibit a greater distribution of alliterative effects compared to Hebrew. The main consonants that form alliteration in P-Ps are ܕ, ܠ and ܡ.³⁵³ It is often difficult to determine whether such alliteration is intentional or unintentional since the consonants are an integral component of Syriac orthography as well as morphology. This is why the analysis of alliteration in P-Ps is particularly challenging and requires careful scrutiny. Nonetheless, it is an important factor to consider in any study on P-Ps poetry.

The repetition of ܡ in Ps 19:8b is an example of an intentional alliteration: ܡܠܬܐ ܡܠܬܐ ܡܠܬܐ ܡܠܬܐ ܡܠܬܐ ܡܠܬܐ ‘the testimony of the Lord is trustworthy, and it imparts wisdom to babes’. Several further prominent instances of striking alliterative forms within strophes from various psalms can be presented. The ܡ-alliteration appears mainly in the hymns where the intensive use of the word ܡܠܬܐ ‘Lord’ fits very well together with verbal participle forms of derived stems beginning with a ܡ. As an instance of a remarkably intense soundscape with ܡ, the first strophe of Ps 19 (vv. 2–5b) should be quoted. The strophe uses eightfold ܡ-alliteration complemented by further occurrences of the *m*-sound in other words:

The heavens narrate the glory of God,
and the expanse of the heavens declares the work of his hands.
Day after day it pours forth speech,
night after night it declares knowledge.

ܡܠܬܐ ܡܠܬܐ ܡܠܬܐ ܡܠܬܐ ܡܠܬܐ ܡܠܬܐ ܡܠܬܐ ܡܠܬܐ
ܡܠܬܐ ܡܠܬܐ ܡܠܬܐ ܡܠܬܐ ܡܠܬܐ ܡܠܬܐ ܡܠܬܐ ܡܠܬܐ
ܡܠܬܐ ܡܠܬܐ ܡܠܬܐ ܡܠܬܐ ܡܠܬܐ ܡܠܬܐ ܡܠܬܐ ܡܠܬܐ
ܡܠܬܐ ܡܠܬܐ ܡܠܬܐ ܡܠܬܐ ܡܠܬܐ ܡܠܬܐ ܡܠܬܐ ܡܠܬܐ

³⁵³ For the discussion of the phonological distinctions between ܠ and ܕ, see the introductory chapter of this study. Concerning the alliterative properties of ܡ, it is methodologically imperative to acknowledge that the frequency of ܡ-initial lexemes and the morphological constraints governing participial constructions in verbal paradigms may significantly influence the manifestation of ܡ-based alliterative patterns. This methodological consideration demonstrates an awareness of the potential confluence between inherent grammatical structures and intentional phonological patterning in the formation of ܡ-alliteration.

There is no speech or words,
for their voice is not heard.
Their tidings have gone forth in all the earth,
and their words to the ends of the world.

לֹא כִּלְכִּילָהּ דְּבָרָא
וְלֹא שָׁמְעָהּ קוֹלָא
וְכָל־אֶרֶץ מְלִמְדָהּ
וְכָל־קֶצֶף עַד־אַחֲרֵי

And again, in the fifth strophe of Ps 29 (vv. 10–11), the occurrence of *ṣ* engenders an alliterative effect, marking the whole of six words out of 15:

The Lord has turned back the flood,
the Lord sits as king forever.
The Lord will give strength to his people,
the Lord will bless his people with peace.

וְיָשׁוּב־הַיָּם וְהַנָּהָר
וְיָשׁוּב־הַיָּם וְהַנָּהָר
וְיָשׁוּב־הַיָּם וְהַנָּהָר
וְיָשׁוּב־הַיָּם וְהַנָּהָר

The gutturals *ʕ* and *ʕ* appear altogether ten times in the last strophe of Ps 86 (vv. 16–17):

Turn to me and be merciful to me,
grant strength to your servant and save the son of your maidservant.
Give me a good sign,
so that my foes might see and be ashamed.
For you, O Lord, have helped me and comforted me.

וְיָשׁוּב־הַיָּם וְהַנָּהָר
וְיָשׁוּב־הַיָּם וְהַנָּהָר
וְיָשׁוּב־הַיָּם וְהַנָּהָר
וְיָשׁוּב־הַיָּם וְהַנָּהָר
וְיָשׁוּב־הַיָּם וְהַנָּהָר

Further popular initial consonants are *ʕ* and *ʕ*. In Ps 96, the first strophe (vv. 1–3) is delineated by the strong presence of *ʕ*-alliteration, complemented by *ʕ*-alliteration:

Praise the Lord (with) a new song,
praise the Lord, all the earth.
Praise the Lord and bless his name,
declare his salvation from day to day.
And relate his glory among the peoples
and his works among all the peoples.

וְיָשׁוּב־הַיָּם וְהַנָּהָר
וְיָשׁוּב־הַיָּם וְהַנָּהָר
וְיָשׁוּב־הַיָּם וְהַנָּהָר
וְיָשׁוּב־הַיָּם וְהַנָּהָר
וְיָשׁוּב־הַיָּם וְהַנָּהָר

An example of *ʕ*-alliteration is the fifth strophe in Ps 155:11–14, characteristically using prepositions (also with suffixes) and negative particles side by side:

Remember me and do not forget me,
and do not allow me to enter too difficult for me.
The sins of my childhood remove from me,
and my rebellion do not remember against me.
Cleanse me, O Lord, from the evil leprosy,
and do not let it again return to me.
Dry up its roots from me,
and do not let its leaves bud in me.

וְיָשׁוּב־הַיָּם וְהַנָּהָר
וְיָשׁוּב־הַיָּם וְהַנָּהָר
וְיָשׁוּב־הַיָּם וְהַנָּהָר
וְיָשׁוּב־הַיָּם וְהַנָּהָר
וְיָשׁוּב־הַיָּם וְהַנָּהָר

Likewise, the most frequent consonants building alliteration in the Hebrew psalms are א and ע, an example from Ps 124:5 being אָזי עָבַר עַל נַפְשֵׁנוּ ‘then (it) passed over on our soul’, and ל and מ. A selection of examples from the following psalms will illustrate the basic tendencies. Three verses 2 and 6–7 from the first strophe of Ps 19 (vv. 2–7) intensively apply the מ-alliteration:

- | | |
|---|---|
| <p>2 The heavens are telling of the glory of God,
and the firmament is declaring the work of his hands.</p> <p>6 That is as a bridegroom coming out of his chamber,
it rejoices as a strong man to run the course.</p> <p>7 Its rising is from one end of the heavens,
and its circuit to the other end of them,
and there is nothing hidden from its heat.</p> | <p>הַשָּׁמַיִם מְסַפְּרִים כְּבוֹד אֱלֹהִים
וּמַעֲשֵׂה יָדָיו מְגִיד הַרְקִיעַ</p> <p>וְהוּא כַּחֲתָן יֵצֵא מִחַמְתּוֹ
יֵשֵׁשׁ כְּגִבּוֹר לְרוֹץ אֶרֶץ</p> <p>מִקְצֵה הַשָּׁמַיִם מוֹצֵאוֹ
וּתְקוּפָתוֹ עַל קְצוֹתָם
וְאֵין נִסְתָּר מִחַמְתּוֹ</p> |
|---|---|

By comparing the quoted verses with the example of the first strophe of the Syriac Ps 19 (vv. 2–5a) above, one becomes aware of how the translator could not avoid the *m*-sound in the Hebrew psalm at all but also realises how the translator has applied it slightly differently. An example of a massive א- and ע-alliteration is the last strophe of Ps 86 (vv. 15–17):

- | | |
|---|--|
| <p>But You, O Lord, are a God merciful and gracious,
slow to anger and abundant in lovingkindness and truth.
Turn to me, and be gracious to me,
O grant your strength to your servant,
and save the son of your maidservant.
Show me a sign for good,
that those who hate me may see it and be ashamed,
because you, O Yhwh, have helped me and comforted me.</p> | <p>וְאַתָּה אֱדֹנִי אֱלֹהִים רַחוּם וְחַנּוּן
אֶרֶךְ אַפַּיִם וְרַב־חֶסֶד וְאֱמֶת
פָּנָה אֵלַי וְחַנּוּנִי
תִּנְהַעֲזֹךְ לַעֲבָדְךָ
וְהוֹשִׁיעָה לְבִן־אֲמָתְךָ
עֲשֵׂה־עֲמִי אֹת לְטוֹבָה
וִירְאוּ שְׁנְאֵי וִיבֹשׁוּ
כִּי־אַתָּה יְהוָה עֲזָרְתָנִי וְנַחֲמָתָנִי</p> |
|---|--|

Verses 16–17 from the same psalm in Syriac have been cited above. Once again, the translator has not tried to avoid the strong alliterative pattern and has even underlined it. In the third strophe of Ps 29 (vv. 5–7), the א / ע-alliteration is combined with the ק / כ-alliteration:

- | | |
|--|---|
| <p>The voice of Yhwh breaks the cedars,
Yhwh breaks the cedars of Lebanon.
And He makes them skip like a calf,
Lebanon and Sirion like a young wild ox.
The voice of Yhwh hews out flames of fire.</p> | <p>קוֹל יְהוָה שֹׁבֵר אֲרָזִים
וְיִשְׁבֵּר יְהוָה אֶת אֲרָזֵי הַלְבָּנוֹן
וְיִרְקִידֵם כְּמוֹ עֵגֶל
לְבָנוֹן וְשִׁרְיֹן כְּמוֹ בֶן־רֵאמִים
קוֹל יְהוָה חָצַב לְהַבּוֹת אֵשׁ</p> |
|--|---|

And as a last example, the use of ש-alliteration in the first strophe of Ps 96 (vv. 1–3) will be provided (notice that the š-sound is also repeated inside the words):

Sing to Yhwh a new song,	שירו ליהוה שיר חדש
sing to Yhwh, all the earth.	שירו ליהוה כל הארץ
Sing to Yhwh, bless his name,	שירו ליהוה ברכו שמו
proclaim his salvation day after day.	בשרו מיום ליום ישועתו
Tell his glory among the nations,	ספרו בגוים כבודו
his wondrous deeds among all the peoples.	בכל העמים נפלאותיו

Alliteration assumes a paramount function in both Syriac and Hebrew texts, accentuating the inherent strophic quality. The Syriac translator demonstrates a profound cognisance of this poetic device, particularly while demarcating strophes; nevertheless, despite taking alliteration directly over from the Hebrew text, he wields it distinctively on his own. The application of alliteration in the Syriac psalms exhibits a heightened intensity compared to its Hebrew counterpart.

3.2. Dominant sound

This study examined dominant sounds occasionally. The results of the investigation suggest that consonants can be used to create a wide range of sonic effects that can be used to emphasise specific ideas, words, verses, and strophes. Furthermore, they develop a sense of rhythm and flow in a text, adding to its overall aesthetic. The distribution of dominant sounds within strophes and psalms in the Syriac and Hebrew texts may differ. For example, let us consider the following strophe from Ps 19, vv. 8–11, where **ܡ** appears at least twice in every colon, whereby the first verse opens with a strong **ܡ**-alliteration:

The law of the Lord is without blemish, it restores the soul;	ܡܠܚܬܐ ܕܡܠܚܬܐ ܕܠܐ ܡܠܚܬܐ ܡܠܚܬܐ
the testimony of the Lord is trustworthy, imparts wisdom to children.	ܡܬܬܢܐ ܕܡܬܬܢܐ ܕܡܬܬܢܐ ܡܬܬܢܐ ܡܬܬܢܐ
The commandments of the Lord are upright, they make the heart glad;	ܡܬܬܢܐ ܕܡܬܬܢܐ ܕܡܬܬܢܐ ܡܬܬܢܐ ܡܬܬܢܐ
the commandment of the Lord is proven, it illumines the eyes.	ܡܬܬܢܐ ܕܡܬܬܢܐ ܕܡܬܬܢܐ ܡܬܬܢܐ ܡܬܬܢܐ
The fear of the Lord is pure, it endures forever.	ܡܬܬܢܐ ܕܡܬܬܢܐ ܕܡܬܬܢܐ ܡܬܬܢܐ ܡܬܬܢܐ
The judgments of the Lord are true, they are just in every way.	ܡܬܬܢܐ ܕܡܬܬܢܐ ܕܡܬܬܢܐ ܡܬܬܢܐ ܡܬܬܢܐ
They are more to be desired than gold and precious stones;	ܡܬܬܢܐ ܕܡܬܬܢܐ ܕܡܬܬܢܐ ܡܬܬܢܐ ܡܬܬܢܐ
they are sweeter than honey and the honeycomb.	ܡܬܬܢܐ ܕܡܬܬܢܐ ܕܡܬܬܢܐ ܡܬܬܢܐ ܡܬܬܢܐ

The Hebrew counterpart of Ps 19:8–11, too, repeats the *m*-sound many times, but the intensity in the Syriac version is incomparable. The data was analysed in Hebrew to determine the contribution of consonants in the structure and aesthetics. A case in point is the third strophe of Ps 8 (vv. 5–9), where **מ** occurring 15 times must be regarded as the dominant sound where the Syriac counterpart showcases less density with six-fold repetition:

What is man that you take thought of him,
and the son of man that you care for him?
Yet you have made him a little lower than God,
and you crown him with glory and majesty!
You make him to rule over the works of your hands,
you have put all things under his feet.
All sheep and oxen,
and also, the beasts of the field,
the birds of the heavens and the fish of the sea,
whatever passes through the paths of the seas.

מה אנוש כי תזכרנו
ובן אדם כי תפקדנו
ותחסרתו מעט מאלהים
וכבוד והדר תעטרתו
תמשילו במעשי ידיך
כל שתה תחת רגליו
צנה ואלפים כלם
וגם בהמות שדי
צפור שמים ודגי הים
עבר ארחות ימים

The results revealed that the repetition of specific sounds combined with alliteration adds an extra poetic layer to the verses and emphasises its role as a strophic marker. If one reads or hears alliteration and dominant sounds so often, one might wonder whether the poetic figures could have been powerful tools for enhancing the memorability of texts. The possibility of oral transmission preceding textual codification warrants consideration in analysing specific Syriac translations, particularly evident in hymnic compositions such as Ps 8 and 19, where characteristics suggest an initial phase of oral circulation before written stabilisation. Evidently, the Syriac translator possessed a discerning awareness of the prevailing sounds present in the Hebrew original and employed this facet within his poetic rendition in a distinct manner.

4. Parallelism

Parallelism is generally known to be a characteristic feature of Biblical Hebrew poetry, although it is also found in related Semitic poetic texts (especially in Akkadian) and elsewhere.³⁵⁴ *Parallelismus membrorum*, along with line length and sound, is the most important factor in the composition of the Hebrew verse.³⁵⁵ Although parallelism is not the main poetic feature of Syriac poetry, it can be observed regularly in P-Ps, whether deliberately or not.³⁵⁶ Since the Syriac translator mostly follows the text of the Hebrew psalms and tries to convey the text faithfully into Syriac, this poetic device has become an integral part of P-Ps. So, where we encounter parallelism in the Hebrew psalms, we usually find the same phenomenon in the Syriac psalms. In other words, parallelism was part of the original Hebrew psalms, and the Syriac translator usually simply followed the same pattern.

Although the Syriac translator sometimes improves the translation by adding or omitting elements to achieve syntactic structures even more parallel than in MT, strict observance of parallelism cannot be attributed to the poetic style of the Syriac

³⁵⁴ Watson 1984, 116.

³⁵⁵ Loretz and Kottsieper 1987, 17.

³⁵⁶ Van Peursen (2016, 67) states that one of the most prominent poetic features in Syriac is parallelism and it mainly stems from the influence of the Hebrew source text.

translator because, in many cases, it does not happen. Accordingly, it is evident that the Syriac translator did this not to demonstrate better parallelism but to clarify the text. For example, Ps 120:7 was translated as follows:

And I was speaking peace,
and they were fighting with me.

וְאֵנִי לְשָׁלוֹם וְכֵן אֶדְבֵּר
וְהֵם לְמִלְחָמָה

I am for peace, but when I speak,
they are for war.

אֵנִי לְשָׁלוֹם וְכֵן אֶדְבֵּר
וְהֵם לְמִלְחָמָה

Here, the Syriac translator not only specified the colon by a prepositional phrase *ܒܝܬܝܝܢ* ‘with me’, but also used the same verbal structure (compound verb) in both cola to achieve a better syntactical structure compared to its Hebrew counterpart (more examples: Ps 19:6, 7, 14).

Due to different versification compared to the Hebrew text, P-Ps sometimes fail to underline parallelism. Here is an illustration of this point from Ps 29:4, where the verse is a monocolon and uses a copula to distinguish two clauses. We have to add that in P-Ps, the verse serves as a closure of the strophe in vv. 3–4:

The voice of the Lord is strong, and the voice of the Lord
is glorious.

וּמִן הַיָּם וּמִן הַיַּבֵּשׁ
וּמִן הַיָּם וּמִן הַיַּבֵּשׁ

The voice of Yhwh is powerful,
the voice of Yhwh is majestic.

קוֹל יְהוָה בַּחַב
קוֹל יְהוָה בַּהֲדָר

In addition to this, we can also remind Ps 86:8 to illustrate the point.

There is none like you, O Lord, my God, and there are no
works like yours.

לֹא אֲבֹהֶיךָ וְלֹא אֲחֵיךָ
לֹא אֲבֹהֶיךָ וְלֹא אֲחֵיךָ

There is no one like you among the gods, O Lord,
nor are there any works like yours.

אֵין כְּמוֹךָ בְּאֱלֹהִים אֲדֹנָי
וְאֵין כְּמוֹשֶׁיְךָ

5. Versification

The earliest biblical manuscripts likely encompassed either a solitary form of semantic segmentation, namely open and closed sections, or lacked any visual divisions altogether. As exegetical traditions flourished across successive generations, the indication of smaller units (verses) gradually emerged, initially conveyed orally and subsequently inscribed in written form. Of particular complexity is the challenge of determining the precise time and place at which the practice of verse division took shape. The genesis of verse divisions can be traced back to the ancient tradition of orally reciting scripture. The scribes responsible for transcribing Hebrew/Aramaic

biblical texts from the Judean Desert refrained from delineating minute verses not because such a method had yet to be conceived but because the convention initially prevailed solely in oral form.³⁵⁷

In this study, it was found that the versification often differs between the Hebrew and Syriac psalms. The analysis of P-Ps shows that the Syriac translator did not follow any strict rules in versifying the translated text. In some cases, the translator preferred the use of a monocolon, although this choice led him to have an unusual (higher) number of syllables in some cola compared to other bicola or tricola.³⁵⁸ It is highly likely that the Syriac translator did not have any accentuated Hebrew manuscript as *Vorlage*, and it was perhaps even not stichometric³⁵⁹—this relativises the finding that Syriac verses do not always follow Hebrew text, as we know it from MT. But in terms of the length of the cola, the observation is important. For the purpose of exemplification, let us now delve into a concise selection of instances. Verse 5 in Ps 124 in the Hebrew MT is accentuated as a bicolon, belonging to a series of bicola in vv. 3–5:

Then passed over on our soul
the proud waters.

אזי עבר על־נפשנו
המים הזידונים

The Syriac translator uses only a bicolon and a monocolon in vv. 4–5, here v. 5:

And many waters would have crossed over us.

ܡܠܬܐ ܡܝܡܝܢ ܕܥܝܪܝܢ ܥܠ ܢܦܫܐ

Verses 7 and 8 from Ps 86 are composed as two bicola in the Hebrew MT:

In the day of my trouble, I shall call upon you,
for you will answer me.
There is no one like you among the gods, O Lord,
nor are there any works like yours.

ביום צרתי אקראך
כי תענני:
אין־כמוך באלהים אדני
ואין כמעשיך

The Syriac translator preferred to form the verses as two monocola:

In the day of my distress, I cried out to you, and you
answered me.

ܠܝܝܡܝܢ ܕܥܝܪܝܢ ܕܥܝܪܝܢ ܕܥܝܪܝܢ

There is none like you, O Lord, my God, and there are
no works like yours.

ܠܐ ܥܡܠܐ ܕܡܝܢ ܕܥܝܪܝܢ ܕܥܝܪܝܢ ܕܥܝܪܝܢ

³⁵⁷ Tov 2018, 127–128.

³⁵⁸ This textual observation stems from manuscript diacritical marks, though the potential loss of some dots in the transmission process precludes absolute certainty in our analysis.

³⁵⁹ Tov (2015, 325–336) holds that the stichographic configurations of poetic manuscripts manifest the scribes' comprehension of the poetic framework, albeit the degree to which these arrangements accurately capture the original intentions of the poets remains ambiguous.

Even though Ps 155 is not written stichometrically in manuscript 11QPs^a, verse 9 in Ps 155 should be read as a bicolon. Parallelism is applied here, and cola have similar colometrical lengths (17:15):

Let me understand your Torah, Yhwh,
and teach me from your judgments.

הבינני יהוה בתורתכה
ואת משפטיכה למדני

In the Syriac translation, the verse is a monocolon. Theoretically, a bicolon would be possible, but its length would still be remarkably uneven (3:2 words and 8:5 syllables):

Enable me to understand, O Lord, your law and teach me your
judgments.

ܡܠܬܝܢ ܕܢܚܝܬܝܢ ܕܡܠܬܝܢ ܕܡܠܬܝܢ ܕܡܠܬܝܢ

As observed, the Syriac translator could often have composed the verses as bicola in order not only to have a more regular versification but to keep the number of syllables closer to the rest of the verses in the same psalm. Therefore, the versification and word, syllable, and consonant counting in P-Ps and the Hebrew psalms can occasionally differ significantly. The question of different versification in P-Ps remains unsolved. We do not know why the Syriac translator did not versify psalms similarly to MT, whereas he did follow the Hebrew syntactic structure most of the time. However, the likely answer to this question might be related to the *Vorlage* manuscript, which was probably not stichometric. Emanuel Tov highlights a collection of 30 manuscripts originating from the Judaean Desert, notable for their intricate stichographic or stichometric organisation. These scrolls were meticulously composed according to a system of rigid *parallelismus membrorum*, predominantly housing poetic texts from the Hebrew Bible. Among them, we find esteemed works such as Job, Proverbs, and Psalms, along with selected melodic pieces from the Torah, notably the Song of the Sea, the Song of Moses, and the Song of Deborah, alongside the acrostics featured in Lam 1–4.³⁶⁰

Consequently, the question of whether the Syriac translators were compelled to exercise autonomous judgment in determining the division of the text into verses or relied upon alternative sources remains an unresolved matter.

6. Metre

As the poetic analysis has shown, the main factor in the study of metre in Syriac poetry is syllable counting. In addition to this tool, word counting and colometry have also been used to better understand the metrical pattern in Syriac poetry. This investigation encompasses quantitative analysis at multiple structural levels,

³⁶⁰ Tov 2018, 166–168.

examining the distribution patterns of consonants, syllables, and lexical units across three hierarchical textual divisions: cola, verses, and strophic units.

The research has revealed that P-Ps occasionally feature verses with isosyllabism, such as Ps 8:6 (9:9), 8 (6:6); 19:3 (8:8), 10 (11:11); 29:8 (8:8); 86:13 (8:8); 96:2 (8:8); 120:4 (6:6), 7 (7:7); 124:8 (7:7); 155:10 (7:7), 11 (6:6), 12 (7:7), 14 (6:6), 21 (6:6). But there are more examples of somewhat unbalanced verses, such as Ps 8:3 (9:5); Ps 29:9 (14:9); Ps 86:2 (7:11); Ps 96:5 (13:5); Ps 124:7 (14:9); Ps 146:3 (12:6); Ps 155:16 (6:10). It is worth noting that Ps 19 and 120 are unique as the examples where there is only a slight variation in the syllable counts of the cola, yet each verse maintains a sense of balance. The usual relation of the number of syllables in the cola of one bicolon or tricolon is unequal, e.g., in Ps 8:2 (6:10:13), 10 (6:10); 19:4 (7:5), 15 (8:11); 29:1 (7:9), 9 (14:9); 96:4 (10:8), 5 (13:5); 120:1 (5:2), 2 (5:7:8); 124:1 (7:12), 4 (6:8); 155:15 (8:12), 16 (6:10). Moreover, the study reveals that the range of syllables used in psalms is 2 at its lowest (Ps 120:1) and 14 at its highest (Ps 29:9; 124:7). Consequently, it becomes evident that the composition of syllable ratios within verses encompasses varying values, at times aligning with the principles of isosyllabism.

Considering that the main feature of classical Syriac poetry from the 4th century onwards is the isosyllabic metrical pattern and that the number of syllables in each verse must be the same, P-Ps does not seem to stand for the pattern strictly. However, the analysis revealed that, despite their heterosyllabic structure, the psalm texts demonstrate a significant propensity toward isosyllabic patterns in their metrical composition. As Turek has suggested, the earliest period of Syriac syllabic poetry could have been characterised by such poems with heterosyllabic metrical patterns.³⁶¹ There is enough ground to believe that also texts before the 4th century were considered poetic, although isosyllabism did not play the leading role there.³⁶² Therefore, this study suggests that P-Ps can be called poetry, which falls into the category of syllabic metres since verses are not consistently bound to isosyllabism.³⁶³

We have also analysed the number of words in cola, verses, and strophes. The number of words used in the Syriac psalms ranges between 1 and 7 per colon. This study has shown that the Syriac psalms sometimes have verses that have an identical number of words, such as Ps 8:8 (3:3); Ps 19:2 (4:4), 3 (4:4), 7 (4:4:4), 9 (5:5), 13 (3:3); 29:1 (4:4), 2 (4:4), 5 (4:4), 8 (4:4), 11 (4:4); 86:1 (4:4), 5 (5:5), 11 (5:5), 15 (5:5), 6 (3:3); 96:1 (4:4), 3 (3:3), 6 (3:3), 7 (4:4), 8 (4:4); 120:2 (3:3:3), 4 (3:3), 7 (4:4); 124:3 (4:4), 4 (4:4); 155:10 (3:3), 21 (3:3), 12 (4:4), 16 (4:4). The list reveals

³⁶¹ Turek 2010, 120.

³⁶² Harris and Mingana (1920, 131) highlight that the poetic style of the Odes is more closely related to Hebrew and Bardesanian traditions, aligning with early Syriac poetry rather than the works of Ephrem or later Syriac poetry. Although our understanding of early Syriac poetry is limited, we propose that the Odes exhibit a greater Hebrew influence unless early Syriac poetry was significantly shaped by the Hebrew poetry of the Old Testament, which is a plausible scenario. Cf. also the Hymn of Pearl in the Acts of Thomas (Beyer 1990).

³⁶³ Watt 1986, XII; Nieten, 2013, 159.

that in certain psalms, such as Ps 19, 29, 86 and 96, word numbers can be equal in many verses, Ps 29 being a particularly strong case with five verses having 4:4 words. The usual case in the Syriac psalms is that verses have an unequal number of words differing by one word between cola, but there are also examples of larger variations: Ps 8:1 (5:2), 7 (7:4); 19:15 (4:6); 29:9 (6:4); 86:12 (7:3); 96:10 (5:4:3); 120:3 (6:2); 124:1 (5:7); 146:8 (1:3:3:2); 155:19 (2:1:3). This study also revealed cases where an equal word count produced favourable results, similar to the patterns observed with syllable counts. It is noteworthy that the majority of verses predominantly consist of an unequal distribution of word count. A predominant proportion of cola exhibits a composition comprising three to four words per colon.

The third way of studying P-Ps quantitatively was to analyse them colometrically. The number of consonants ranges between 4 and 31. It is noteworthy that there are verses within the text that exhibit consonantal balance, the intentionality of which remains undetermined. If we define colometrical balance similarly to the studies on Hebrew colometry, a slight variety of up to three consonants within one verse is possible. Hence, balanced length of consonants can be observed, e.g., in Ps 8:8 (13:12); 5 (17: 14), 6 (18, 21), Ps 19:2 (20:20); 3 (17:18), 4 (15:14), 5 (19:18:19), 6 (24:22), 7 (14:16:14), 12 (16:17), 13 (13:12); 29:2 (18:21), 3 (13:12:14), 5 (17:17), 8 (18:18), 10 (13:15), 11 (15:17); Ps 86:1 (17:17), 6 (12:12), 11 (24:23), 15 (25:24); 96:1 (20:17), 2 (18:19), 3 (16:17), 4 (18:16), 6 (16:19), 7 (18:21), 9 (21:20), 10 (20:18:17); 120:2 (13:12:14), 4 (17:14), 5 (16:15), 7 (16:18); 124: 4 (15:16), 8 (16:15); 146:8 (12:12:12), 155:10 (17:16), 11 (17:17), 12 (18:16), 13 (18:17), 21 (14:16). A handful of instances showcases unbalanced colometry, because the numbers of consonants differ remarkably, e.g., in Ps 8:2 (24:16), 4 (21:14); Ps 19:15 (21:29), 10 (23:29); Ps 29:6 (14:21), 9 (26:19); Ps 86:2 (17:23), 10 (9:26); Ps 96:5 (28:12), 11 (18:12); Ps 120:1 (16:5), 3 (22:11); Ps 124:1 (14:10), 7 (27:18); Ps 146:3 (23:15), 8 (4:12:12:8); 155:14 (12:17), 15 (16:25). As evidenced, notwithstanding the presence of certain instances characterised by balanced colometry within Syriac verses, the prevailing trend across the majority of verses exhibits unbalanced colometrical structures. Notably, Ps 19 emerges as the pinnacle with the highest incidence of verses demonstrating colometrical balance.

In summary, drawing upon the analysis of syllabic and lexical metrics, as well as colometrical examination, it can be deduced that the Syriac text exhibits a higher degree of regularity and uniformity in terms of syllable and word ratios in comparison to its colometrical ratio. The Syriac psalms, with their inherent poetic attributes embedded within their structural framework, undoubtedly constitute a form of poetry; nevertheless, it has not fully adhered to the established convention of isosyllabism of the classical Syriac poetic patterns. Instead, this text has its own unique set of stylistic features, serving as a starting point that slowly develops toward a pattern where all lines have the same number of syllables.

The examination of P-Ps has uncovered variability in the syllabic composition of cola, as well as in the arrangement of verses to form strophes within individual psalms. This heterogeneity in structure stands in stark contrast to the more regimented forms

found in classical Syriac poetry, nor do they maintain a purely isosyllabic metre throughout.

Colometry stands as the quintessential tool within the realm of poetic inquiry when examining the Hebrew psalms, and it has notably played an integral role in this investigation. Consequently, we have discovered balanced consonantal length in many verses of the Hebrew psalms; instances of remarkable balance are listed here: Ps 8:3 (15:16:16), 5 (14:14); Ps 19:2 (17:18), 7 (14:14:13); 29:1 (15:15), 4 (10:11); Ps 86:1 (15:14), 5 (16:14); Ps 96:1 (15:15), 13 (12:12:11:12); 120:1 (13:11), 5 (15:14); 124:6 (8:8:9), 5 (13:12); 146:5 (15:15), 8 (12:13:13); 155:8 (18:20), 13 (15:14). Additionally, some examples of unbalanced colometrical length can be provided: Ps 8:10 (10:16), Ps 19:4 (15:11), 14 (14:9:6:12); Ps 29:2 (15:19), 5 (15:21); Ps 86:2 (17:24), 11 (22:15); Ps 96:5 (19:12), 11 (18:12); Ps 120:7 (15:9), 2 (13:7:9); Ps 124:1 (15:11), 7 (15:9:7:12); Ps 146:6 (11:15:11); Ps 155:7 (16:7), 15 (11:20). It should be noted that Qinah and reversed Qinah are recognised as established patterns of unbalanced verses.

Overall, the colometrical analysis yielded evidence supporting the regular occurrence of balanced colometrical length within the Hebrew text, balanced meaning a difference of a maximum of three consonants. It is noteworthy that Ps 146, in complete contrast to its Syriac counterpart, emerges as the preeminent instance exhibiting the highest frequency of verses with a balanced colometrical ratio, whereas Ps 86, which also represents Qinah verses, occupies the opposite end of the spectrum, featuring the lowest occurrence of such balanced colometry within its verses.

In relation to the ratio of syllables in the Hebrew psalms, herewith, a few examples of balanced or nearly balanced syllabic structures from our study are presented: Ps 8:6 (12:11), 8 (8:7); Ps 19:2 (11:11), 5 (9:8:8); Ps 29:1 (9:9), 8 (7:8); Ps 86:1 (10:8), 15 (12:12); Ps 96:12 (10:10), 13 (6:7:7:8); Ps 120:1 (8:8), 3 (5:5:5); Ps 124:3 (8:7), 7 (7:8); Ps 146:5 (9:9), 6 (8:9); Ps 155:14 (8:8), 18 (6:8). Additionally, a small assortment of instances depicting unbalanced ratio of syllables can be provided: Ps 8:10 (6:10), 2 (6:10:13); Ps 19:11 (8:4:7:5), 14 (9:5:7:4); Ps 29:5 (8:13), 6 (8:12:9); Ps 86:2 (10:16), 11 (16:11); Ps 96:5 (11:7), 11 (13:9); Ps 120:7 (10:6); Ps 124:7 (9:5:4:8); Ps 155:7 (10:5), 15 (6:13).

Generally, the analysis reveals a persistent and recurrent presence of a balanced syllabic ratio within verses in the Hebrew text. It is of particular significance to observe that Ps 146 stands out as the sole instance where all verses maintain a state of balance, while Ps 86 exhibits the lowest degree of syllabic balanced ratio.

This study has shown that the Hebrew psalms sometimes have verses that have an identical number of words: Ps 8:5 (4:4), 6 (3:3), 8 (3:3); Ps 19:2 (4:4), 3 (4:4), 7 (4:4:4), 9 (5:5), 13 (3:3); Ps 29:1 (4:4), 2 (4:4), 8 (4:4); Ps 86:1 (4:4), 5 (4:4), 11 (4:4), 15 (5:5), 6 (3:3); Ps 96:1 (4:4), 3 (3:3), 6 (3:3), 7 (4:4), 8 (4:4); Ps 120:4 (3:3); Ps 124:3 (3:3), 6 (2:2:2), 8 (3:3); Ps 146:2 (3:3), 4 (4:4), 5 (4:4), 7 (3:3:3), 8 (3:3:3); Ps 155:9 (3:3), 12 (4:4), 13 (4:4). Other verses can have a rather unequal number of words: Ps 8:1 (2:5:5), 10 (2:5); Ps 19:14 (5:4:3), 15 (4:6); Ps 29:7 (6:5:5), 9 (4:2:4); Ps 86:9 (3:4:2), 12 (7:3); Ps 96:9 (4:5), 12 (5:6); Ps 120:1 (4:2),

3 (3:3:2); Ps 124:5 (4:2), 7 (3:2:2); Ps 146:3 (3:5), 6 (3:5:3); Ps 155:7 (4:2), 17 (3:4:3).

In a comprehensive assessment, this study demonstrated that the prevailing frequency of numerical occurrences of words within the Hebrew text predominantly centres around the values of three and four.

In conclusion, the examination of colometry and syllable ratios in the Hebrew text reveals a tendency toward a persistent and orderly pattern within verses, with a predominant composition of 3–4 words. As anticipated, the Syriac text diverges from its Hebrew counterpart in terms of colometrical ratio. This divergence can be attributed to the translation style employed in P-Ps, showing that syllables are more important for the Syriac text. Consequently, the colometry of Syriac psalms often manifests a greater degree of irregularity compared to their Hebrew counterparts. Nevertheless, it could be concluded that colometry is not used much in P-Ps.

Regarding the number of syllables per verse, both the Syriac and Hebrew versions tend to have a consistent and balanced pattern. According to syllabic theory, the Hebrew psalms do not show an isosyllabic metrical pattern, but the number of syllables is usually close to each other. The Hebrew psalms have a noticeable range of syllables between 4 and 13 per colon. A further aspect of the Hebrew psalms is that the number of words used ranges from 2 to 6, and the number of consonants (colometry) ranges from 6 to 28.

The analysis of syllabic distribution in the Hebrew and Syriac texts of psalms yields the following data: Ps 8 has an average of 8.11 syllables per colon in Syriac and 9.14 in Hebrew; Ps 19 shows 8.64 in Syriac compared to 7.29 in Hebrew; Ps 29 records 8.61 in Syriac and 8.52 in Hebrew; Ps 86 presents 8.32 in Syriac versus 10.00 in Hebrew; Ps 96 has 7.58 in Syriac and 9.03 in Hebrew; Ps 120 shows 6.78 in Syriac and 6.87 in Hebrew; Ps 124 reveals 8.53 in Syriac against 7.10 in Hebrew; Ps 146 registers 7.26 in Syriac and 8.13 in Hebrew; and Ps 155, an apocryphal psalm, has 7.21 in Syriac and 9.42 in Hebrew.

Comparing these figures reveals several trends. Psalms 29 and 120 exhibit minimal differences between the two versions, indicating a close alignment in syllabic structure. In contrast, Ps 86 shows a substantial reduction in syllables in the Syriac text (8.32) compared to the Hebrew (10.00). Conversely, Ps 19 and 124 demonstrate an increase in syllabic density in the Syriac version, with differences of 1.35 and 1.43 syllables, respectively. The non-canonical Ps 155 also shows a significant reduction in the Syriac rendition.

Overall, the data suggest that while the Syriac translators occasionally maintained syllabic consistency with the Hebrew text, there were differences, too. Variations in syllable counts reflect the translators' flexibility in balancing fidelity to the source text with linguistic and stylistic considerations in the target language.

The quantitative analysis of the selected psalms, examining the distribution patterns of words, syllables, and consonants across strophic units, reveals significant insights into the relationship between Hebrew and Syriac psalm compositions. The statistical evidence demonstrates that while the Syriac translation exhibits varying degrees of deviation from the Hebrew text in terms of quantitative features, it usually

forms inclusion, 96:11–12 where its initial adverb ܐܢܝܢ functions as a closure and accentuates the fifth strophe.

Throughout the investigation, there were instances where the Syriac text provided clarification of the Hebrew, whether in terms of strophic structure or semantic interpretation. This suggests a tendency on the part of the Syriac translator to enhance the clarity or coherence of the text. While this is an essential and noteworthy aspect of the translation process, the phenomenon was observed but not addressed in a systematic or detailed manner within the scope of this study. An example of semantic clarification can be found in Ps 120:7, where the Syriac translator adds the phrase “with me” to enhance the clarity of the text. This addition provides an explicit nuance absent from the original Hebrew, demonstrating the translator’s effort to make the meaning more accessible or contextually specific for the Syriac audience.

In summary, it becomes apparent that the translator was sensible towards the poetic mechanisms present in the Hebrew source text and endeavoured to convey them in the Syriac interpretation faithfully. However, it is noteworthy that there were instances where these devices were employed with innovative adaptations, deviating from their counterparts in the original text. Moreover, these poetic devices play a supportive role in establishing the strophic frameworks found within the psalms.

8. Translation technique

The Syriac text preserves the meaning of the source text and maintains the aesthetics of the poetic text. The translator aims to produce a translation that is faithful to the source text and aesthetically pleasing to hearing. As Tauberschmidt holds, “in translating poetic texts there must be a concern not only for correct meaning, but also for conveying the poetic impact of the text.”³⁶⁵

It is the clarity of the translation that catches the eye in P-Ps. From the source text to the target text, the translator has tried to make the complex Hebrew text as legible as possible. A readable and understandable translation was the primary objective of the P-Ps translation rather than a literal rendering. Furthermore, the translator has taken the liberty of occasionally paraphrasing the text to make it more accessible to a broader audience. As far as word order is concerned, Syriac grammar emphasises the adaptability and flexibility of its language.³⁶⁶ This translation, however, is such that it does not twist the meaning or betray the fidelity of the original text, and at the same time, it is perfectly compatible with Syriac syntax. It seems that the Syriac translator usually follows the Hebrew word order in the translation. However, Carbajosa claims that P-Ps does not follow the word order of its Hebrew *Vorlage* and uses its own syntactic rules.³⁶⁷ In addition, Weitzman holds that the imitation of

³⁶⁵ Tauberschmidt 2005, 66.

³⁶⁶ Nöldeke 1966, 248; Brockelmann 1951, 118; Carbajosa 2008, 21.

³⁶⁷ Carbajosa 2008, 381.

Hebrew was not the main lead of the Syriac translator, but the closeness between the two languages brings about this likeness.³⁶⁸

With regard to the extent of this study, this investigation has not encountered any explicit instances within the syntax of P-Ps where a definitive departure from the established Hebrew word order is evident. Nevertheless, this study posits with conviction that the Syriac translator, in certain instances, incorporates or excludes elements in order to attain a translation that is more comprehensible in nature.

Additionally, the lack of systematicity in P-Ps's lexical correspondence is noteworthy, as is the tendency sometimes to translate different Hebrew words with a single Syriac word, contributing to the poetic feature of word repetition.

In summary, the translator's method of re-contextualising the poetic devices within the Syriac version engenders a distinctive rendering that sets it apart from the Hebrew source text. Thus, it becomes apparent that the translator possessed a discerning comprehension of the poetic devices and adeptly wielded the ability to manipulate them.

The question of whether the Syriac translation of the Old Testament reflects the Syriac poetic conventions of its time, later poetic developments, or general poetic sensibilities is a complex one. The Psalms were likely translated during the 2nd–3rd centuries CE, a period when Syriac literature was still evolving. While poetic elements such as parallelism, repetition, and structural patterns were already present in early Syriac texts, fully developed poetic conventions – like those seen in the later works of Ephrem or Jacob of Serugh – had not yet been firmly established.

Scholars such as Carbajosa and Van Peursen have observed that the translators of the Syriac Old Testament demonstrated a strong awareness of the poetic features of the Hebrew source text.³⁶⁹ This is particularly clear in their treatment of parallelism and strophic structures, central to Hebrew poetry. However, instead of simply replicating Hebrew poetic conventions, the translators adapted these features to fit the linguistic and cultural context of Syriac, creating a distinctive style that blended elements of both traditions.

In summary, the Syriac translation of the Old Testament reflects a mix of influences: the poetic structure of the Hebrew text, the developing literary trends in Syriac, and the translator's own artistic judgment. These choices were less about following rigid conventions and more about crafting a text that was both faithful to its source and resonant within the Syriac literary tradition.

³⁶⁸ Weitzman 1999, 26.

³⁶⁹ See 1.1 and 1.2 of the introductory chapter above.

9. Non-canonical Psalm 155 compared to canonical psalms

Analysis of the Syriac rendition of Ps 155 reveals the sophisticated implementation of structural demarcation strategies analogous to those employed in the canonical psalms. The translator uses a multilayered system of implicit textual boundaries, incorporating diverse linguistic and stylistic mechanisms. The strophic architecture demonstrates deliberate organisation through multiple structural indicators: synonymous parallel constructions, alliterative patterns, thematic unity, morphological consistency, semantic field cohesion, discourse particles, and chiasmic arrangements.

The text's structural integrity is reinforced through phonological features and lexical reiteration, just as in other psalms. As observed in the canonical psalms, the translation methodology of Ps 155 exhibits a source-text orientation, capitalising on the genetic affiliation between Syriac and Hebrew within the Semitic language family.

Quantitative analysis reveals that the average number of syllables per colon (7.21) in Ps 155 is marginally below the normative, aligning with patterns documented in Ps 146 and 120. This compositional analysis substantiates that Ps 155 adheres to established canonical psalmic conventions, demonstrating methodological consistency with the broader psalmic corpus.

10. Further perspectives

This dissertation has offered a critical comparative analysis of aspects of poetic structures and devices, mainly focusing on a strophic arrangement of the Hebrew MT and the P-Ps, along with sound patterns and word repetitions. Based on the findings in this work, further investigation may require focusing on the function of accentuation systems in strophic divisions with respect to their interaction with other poetic devices. However, based on the manuscript evidence such as Ms 7a1 and the East-Syriac Masora, later investigations could explore how accent patterns might influence the organisation of strophes and bring insight into the processes of translation and adaptation that the Syriac translators employed. It would extend other critical framings of strophic structures with a possibility of laying bare additional correspondences between Hebrew and Syriac poetic forms in their relationship to sound patterns and word repetition that characterise sacred poetry.

GENERAL CONCLUSIONS

Our study demonstrates that both the examined Peshitta psalms (comprising Ps 8, 19, 29, 86, 96, 120, 124, and 146) and the non-canonical Ps 155 exhibit deliberate structural segmentation into discrete compositional units, herein designated as *strophes*. They serve to facilitate the hearing and comprehension of the poem. The phenomenon basically follows the idea of strophic structures in the Hebrew psalms, and the strophes can usually have the same length in both versions, but the Syriac strophes do not precisely copy the Hebrew strophes. Despite similarities between the Syriac strophes and the Hebrew strophes, the Syriac strophes do not directly replicate the Hebrew ones.

Various *markers* are identified in the study that are useful for delineating strophes within the Psalter, such as word repetition, alliteration, inclusion, chiasmus, closure, syntactic structure, word pairs, thematic shifts, shift subject matter, and parallelism. These markers contribute to the distinct characteristics and conventions of Syriac psalm strophes.

The Syriac translator was aware of the strophic markers in Hebrew but applied them in a slightly different way. Through the use of markers, the Syriac translation displays its own poetic artistry, making it a work of art in its own right. Additionally, Peshitta psalm strophes vary in length, ranging from a monocolon to 12 cola, with most strophes displaying a pattern of 4, 5 or 8 cola. Among the psalms studied, Ps 29 and 96 have the most consistent and regular strophic structures. Peshitta psalms are primarily composed of strophes with a different number of cola.

Word repetition has two primary purposes in the Syriac and Hebrew versions of the psalms: delineating strophes and enhancing mnemotechnics. There is, however, a difference between the two versions regarding the distribution of word repetition within strophes. In terms of the number of words and the number of repetitions in specific psalms, a variety of patterns can be observed. In some psalms, Syriac and Hebrew words are repeated equally, while other psalms indicate that Syriac or Hebrew words are more frequently repeated than the other. In certain psalms, Syriac translators' technique and style contribute to the superiority of Syriac word repetition, allowing for dynamic translation and adaptation to the Syriac language.

Repetition of words serves the same purpose in both Syriac and Hebrew texts in highlighting strophes. It is important to note, however, that the number of repeated words within a single psalm may vary. For example, in Syriac Ps 124, the first and second strophes have more pronounced word repetition than the third strophe. There are occasions when the Syriac translator uses a single word to translate two different Hebrew words, while there are other times when a single Hebrew word is translated with multiple Syriac equivalents.

In our study, *sound figures*, particularly *alliteration*, were examined. The use of alliteration is defined as the repetition of the initial consonant of a word. Compared to Hebrew, Syriac psalms exhibit a greater distribution of alliterative effects, with specific consonants such as *mem*, *'alef* and *'ayin* contributing significantly to

alliteration. Determining intentional or unintentional alliteration in the Syriac psalms is difficult due to the integral role these consonants play in Syriac orthography and morphology, but the analysis of alliteration can be considered an important factor in studying Syriac poetry. The alliteration in the Hebrew psalms is characterised by consonants such as 'alef, 'ayin, lamedh and mem.

Parallelism is also discussed in the dissertation as one of the characteristics of Biblical Hebrew poetry, which can also be found in related Semitic poetic texts and in other languages. While parallelism is not a characteristic of Syriac poetry, it is frequently observed in the Peshitta psalms due to the Syriac translator's fidelity to the Hebrew text. Van Peursen (2016, 67) is correct in stating that the most prominent poetic features in Syriac are parallelism (influenced by the Hebrew text) and repetition. Parallelism mainly stems from the influence of the Hebrew source text, whereas repetition typically results from the translator's approach to managing lexical variations in the original text.

The Syriac translator may sometimes modify the translation by adding or omitting elements to produce even more parallel syntactic structures. This is not solely due to the translator's poetic style but rather to a desire to enhance clarity. Differences in versification might affect the use of parallelism in the Syriac psalms.

By comparing the Syriac translation of the psalms with the Hebrew Masoretic text, differences in *versification* can be observed. When versifying the text, the Syriac translator sometimes chose monocola instead of bicola or tricola, resulting in variations in the number of syllables, words and consonants. The Syriac verses do not always align with the Hebrew text, as found in the Masoretic text. The reason for these differences may be related to the *Vorlage* (source manuscript) used by the Syriac translator, which may not have been stichometric. Manuscripts from the Judean Desert organised stichometrically exist, but it is uncertain whether the Syriac translators relied on similar manuscripts or exercised autonomous judgment in verse division.

Particular emphasis of the study has been *metre* in both versions. In the Syriac text, syllable counting is the primary method for analysing metre, although word counting and colometry were also used. Syriac psalms contain instances of isosyllabic verses as well as verses with an unequal number of syllables. There are variations and instances of balance in the number of syllables, words and consonants used in the psalms. Compared to colometrical ratios, the Syriac psalms exhibit a higher degree of regularity and uniformity in syllable and word ratios. Accordingly, the psalms can be considered a form of poetry with their own stylistic elements that differ from the classical Syriac poetic forms. Syllabic quantification analysis of the Syriac textual tradition demonstrates a significant methodological function, revealing that while these psalms do not manifest strict isosyllabic metrical regularity, they nevertheless exhibit a discernible propensity toward syllabic equilibrium both at the verse and strophic levels. Considering the word and syllable counts in Hebrew psalms, colometry is emphasised as an essential tool in analysing these texts. The Hebrew text contains examples of balanced and unbalanced colometry and syllabic

structures. The cola of several Hebrew verses might also have an equal number of words.

Throughout the Syriac text, the translator demonstrated an *understanding of various poetic devices* found in the Hebrew text and attempted to incorporate them into the Syriac text. However, these devices were sometimes used differently than in the original Hebrew verses. Among these poetic devices, inclusion can be seen in Syriac Ps 8:2a+10; Ps 19:5c+7c; Ps 29:3a+4, 10+11; Ps 86:13+15; Ps 96:11a+12b; 120:1+3; Ps 124:4a+5; Ps 146:7+8; Ps 155:15+17. Several examples of chiasmus include Ps 8:4+6; Ps 19:2+3; Ps 124:7; Ps 155:11+14. The strophic closure is evident in many cases, examples being Ps 19:8–11 and Ps 96:7–9, 11–12. It is clear that the translator tried to faithfully convey the poetic mechanisms of the Hebrew text into Syriac, but he made some innovative adaptations that contributed to the establishment of the strophic frameworks.

According to the dissertation, the purpose of the Syriac translation is to preserve the meaning of the original text while keeping its poetic aesthetics. The Peshitta translation emphasises clarity, with the translator ensuring the complex Hebrew text is legible and understandable. It is more important to produce a readable and accessible translation than a strictly literal version of the text. The Syriac translator had the liberty of simplifying and paraphrasing the text in order to reach a wider audience.

There is a degree of adaptability and flexibility in Syriac grammar in terms of *word order*. Even though the Syriac translation appears to follow the Hebrew word order, some scholars contend that it has its own syntactic rules. According to this study, no explicit indications exist that the Syriac translation deviates from the established Hebrew word order. Additionally, the study notes that the lexical correspondence in the Syriac translation is not systematic and that sometimes different Hebrew words are translated as the same Syriac word, contributing to a poetic repetition of words.

As a result, the Syriac translator re-contextualised poetic devices in the Syriac translation in a manner that differs from the Hebrew original. It is evident from the translator's use of poetic devices that he has a deep understanding of them and the ability to manipulate them with skill.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Alexander**, Joseph Addison. 1864. *The Psalms Translated and Explained*. Edinburgh: Andrew Elliot and James Thin.
- Allen**, Leslie C. 2002. *Psalms 101–150*. Word Biblical Commentary, Vol. 21. Nashville: Nelson Reference & Electronic.
- Alonso Schökel**, Luis. 1988. *A Manual of Hebrew Poetics*. Roma: Editrice Pontificio Instituto Biblico E. P. I. B.
- Alter**, Robert. 2009. *The Book of Psalms: A Translation with Commentary*. New York, London: W.W. Norton.
- Anderson**, Arnold Albert. 1972. *Psalms 1–72*. New Century Bible Commentary. Grand Rapids, London: Eerdmans; Marshall, Morgan & Scott.
- Baethgen**, Friedrich. 1904. *Die Psalmen*. Handkommentar zum Alten Testament, Bd. II.2. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht.
- Barsoum**, Ignatius Aphram I. 2003. *The Scattered Pearls. A History of Syriac Literature and Sciences*. Translated and edited by Matti Moosa. Revised. Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press.
- Bellinger**, William H. 1990. *Psalms. Reading and Studying the Book of Praises*. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers.
- Berlin**, Adele. 2008. *The Dynamics of Biblical Parallelism*. Grand Rapids, MI, Cambridge: William B. Eerdmans.
- Beyer**, Klaus. 1977. “Der Ausfall der drucklosen kurzen Vokale in offener Silbe und die Trennung silbenanlautender Doppelkonsonanz.” – *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft*, Suppl. 3, 1, 649–653.
- Beyer**, Klaus. 1984. *Die aramäischen Texte vom Toten Meer*. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht.
- Beyer**, Klaus. 1990. “Das syrische Perlenlied. Ein Erlösungsmythos als Märchengedicht.” – *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft*, Vol. 140, No. 2, 234–259.
- BHS** = *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia*. Editio funditus renovata. Eds. K. Elliger, W. Rudolph. Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1984.
- Bickell**, Gustav. 1879. *Metrices biblicae regulae exemplis illustratae*. Innsbruck: Libreria Academica Wagneria.
- Boer**, Pieter Arie Hendrik de; **Baars**, Willem. 1972. *The Old Testament in Syriac According to the Peshitta Version, Part IV, Fasc. 6. General Preface*. The Peshitta Institute, ed. Leiden: E.J. Brill.
- Bratcher**, Robert G.; **Reyburn**, William David. 1991. *A Translator’s Handbook on the Book of Psalms*. New York: United Bible Societies.
- Briggs**, Charles Augustus; **Briggs**, Emilie Grace. 1906–1907. *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Psalms*, Vol. 1–2. International Critical Commentary on the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments. Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark.
- Brock**, Sebastian P. 1985. “Syriac and Greek Hymnography: Problems of Origin.” – *Studia Patristica*, Vol. 16, 77–81.
- Brock**, Sebastian P. 2008. “Poetry and Hymnography (3): Syriac.” – *The Oxford Handbook of Early Christian Studies*. Eds. Susan Ashbrook Harvey, David G. Hunter. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 657–671.
- Brock**, Sebastian P. 2011. “Poetry.” – *e-GEDSH. Gorgias Encyclopedic Dictionary of the Syriac Heritage: Electronic Edition*. Eds. George Anton Kiraz et al. Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press; online ed. Beth Mardutho (2018) <https://gedsh.bethmardutho.org/Poetry>.

- Brockelmann**, Carl. 1951. "Die "Tempora" des Semitischen." – *STUF-Language Typology and Universals*, Vol. 5, No. 1–2, 133–154.
- Brown**, William P. 2014. *The Oxford Handbook of the Psalms*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Brzegowy**, Tadeusz. 2007. *Psalterz i Księga Lamentacji*. Tarnów: Wydawnictwo Diecezji Tarnowskiej Biblos.
- Buttenwieser**, Moses. 1938. *The Psalms. Chronologically Treated with a New Translation*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- Butts**, Aaron M. 2019. "Textual History of Psalms 151–155." – *Textual History of the Bible, Vol. 2C: The Deuterocanonical Scriptures: Jubilees, Judith, Maccabees, Prayer of Manasseh, Psalms 151–155, Psalms and Odes of Solomon, Tobit, Wisdom of Solomon; Appendix: Odes*. Eds. Armin Lange et al. Leiden, Boston: Brill, 296–301.
- Carbajosa**, Ignacio. 2008. *The Character of the Syriac Version of Psalm. A Study of Psalms 90–150 in the Peshitta*. Translated by Paul Stevenson. Monographs of the Peshitta Institute, Vol. 17. Leiden, Boston: Brill.
- Carbajosa**, Ignacio. 2016. "Peshitta." – *Textual History of the Bible, Vol. 1A: The Hebrew Bible: Overview articles*. Eds. Armin Lange, Emanuel Tov. Leiden, Boston: Brill, 262–278.
- Ceriani**, Antonio Maria. 1876. *Translatio Syra Pescitto Veteris Testamenti ex Codice Ambrosiano sec. Fere VI*. Photolithographice Edita Curante et Adnotante. London: Williams & Norgate.
- Charlesworth**, James H. et al. 1997. *The Dead Sea Scrolls. 4A: Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek Texts with English Translations. Pseudepigraphic and Non-Masoretic Psalms and Prayers*. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck; Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press.
- Charlesworth**, James H. et al., eds. 2006. *The Dead Sea Scrolls: Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek Texts with English Translations. Vol. 3 Damascus Document II, Some Works of the Torah, and Related Documents*. Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck).
- Cheyne**, Thomas Kelly. 1904. *The Book of Psalms Translated from a Revised Text with Notes and Introduction: in Place of a Second Edition of an Earlier Work (1888) by the Same Author*, Vol. 2. New York: Thomas Whittaker.
- Clifford**, Richard J. 2002. *Psalms 1–72*. Abingdon Old Testament Commentaries. Nashville: Abingdon Press.
- Craigie**, Peter Campbell. 2004. *Psalms 1–50 (Revised Edition)*. Word Biblical Commentary, Vol. 19. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.
- Crenshaw**, James L. 2001. *The Psalms: An Introduction*. Grand Rapids, Mich: William B. Eerdmans.
- Crüsemann**, Frank. 1969. *Studien zur Formgeschichte von Hymnus und Danklied in Israel*. Wissenschaftliche Monographien zum Alten und Neuen Testament, Vol. 32. Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag.
- Dahood**, Mitchell. 1965. *Psalms. I, 1–50*. The Anchor Bible, Vol. 16. Garden City, NY: Doubleday.
- Daniels**, Peter T. 1997. "Classical Syriac Phonology." – *Phonologies of Asia and Africa: (Including the Caucasus)*. A. S. Kaye, P. T. Daniels, eds. Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 127–140.
- Dawlabani**, Mar Philoxenos Y. 1970. *Pu'itutho*. Aleppo.
- DeClaissé-Walford**, Nancy; **Jacobson**, Rolf A.; **Tanner**, Beth LaNeel. 2014. *The Book of Psalms*. The New International Commentary on the Old Testament. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans.

- Dimock**, Henry. 1791. *Notes Critical and Explanatory on the Books of Psalms and Proverbs*. St. Paul's Church Yard, London, Gloucester: J.F. and C. Rivington.
- Dirksen**, Piet B. 1993. *La Peshitta dell'Antico Testamento*. Brescia: Paideia.
- Donner**, Herbert. 1967. "Ugaritismen in der Psalmenforschung." – *Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft*, Vol. 79, No. 3, 324–327.
- Duhm**, Bernhard. 1922. *Die Psalmen*. Kurzer Hand-Kommentar zum Alten Testament. Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr.
- Duval**, Rubens. 1881. *Traité de Grammaire Syriaque*. Paris: F. Vieweg, Libraire Editeur.
- Dyk**, Janet W; **van Keulen**, Percy SF. 2013. *Language System, Translation Technique, and Textual Tradition in the Peshitta of Kings*. Leiden: Brill.
- Eaton**, John. 2003. *The Psalms: A historical and spiritual commentary with an introduction and new translation*. London: T&T Clark.
- Emereau**, Casimir. 2011. *Saint Ephrem le Syrien: Son Oeuvre Littéraire Grecque*. Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press.
- Eriksson**, Jan Erik. 1989. *The Hymns of David Interpreted in Syriac: A Study of Translation Technique in the First Book of the Psalms (Ps 1–41) in the Peshitta*. Dissertation, Uppsala: Uppsala University.
- Fidanzio**, Marcello. 2010. "Composition des psaumes 84–88." – *The Composition of the Book of Psalms*. Ed. E. Zenger, Bibliotheca Ephemeridum theologicarum Lovaniensium, Vol. 238. Leuven et al.: Uitgeverij Peeters, 463–468.
- Fohrer**, Georg; **Sellin**, Ernst. 1976. *Introduction to the Old Testament*. Translated by David Green. London: S.P.C.K.
- Fokkelman**, Jan. 2000. *Major Poems of the Hebrew Bible: At the Interface of Prosody and Structural Analysis, Vol II: 85 Psalms and Job 4–14*. Studia Semitica Neerlandica, Vol. 41. Assen: Van Gorcum.
- Fokkelman**, Jan. 2003. *Major Poems of the Hebrew Bible at the Interface of Prosody and Structural Analysis, Vol III: The Remaining 65 Psalms*. Studia Semitica Neerlandica, Vol. 43. Assen: Van Gorcum.
- Freedman**, David Noel; **Hyland**, C. Franke. 1973. "Psalm 29: A Structural Analysis." – *Harvard Theological Review*, Vol. 66, No. 2, 237–256.
- Gemenen**, Willem A. van. 2008. *Psalms*. The Expositor's Bible Commentary, Vol. 5. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan.
- Gerstenberger**, Erhard S. 1988. *Psalms, Part I, with an introduction to Cultic poetry*. The Forms of the Old Testament Literature, Vol. 14. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans.
- Giavini**, Giovanni. 1966. "La struttura letteraria del Salmo 86 (85)." – *Rivista Biblica*, Vol. 14, 455–458.
- Grant**, Jamie. 2007. "[Review:] Frank-Lothar Hossfeld and Erich Zenger: Psalms 2: A Commentary on Psalms 51–100." – *European Journal of Theology*, Vol. 16, No. 2, 139.
- Greenfield**, Jonas. 1979. "Early Aramaic Poetry." – *Journal of the Ancient Near Eastern Society*, Vol. 11, 45–51.
- Greenfield**, Jonas. 1989. "On Mandaic Poetic Technique." – *Studia Semitica Neerlandica*. Wiesbaden: O. Harrassowitz, 101–108.
- Greenfield**, Stanley. 1971. "Ellipsis and Meaning in Poetry." – *Texas Studies in Literature and Language*, Vol. 13, No. 1, 137–147.
- Grimme**, Hubert. 1893. "Grundzüge der syrischen Betonungs- und Verslehre." – *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft*, Vol. 47(2), 276–307.
- Gunkel**, Hermann. 1903. "Psalm 8: An Interpretation." – *The Biblical World*, Vol. 21, No. 3, 206–209.

- Hage**, Louis. 1987. *The Syriac Model Strophes and Their Poetic Meters*. Kaslik, Lebanon: University of the Holy Spirit.
- Harris**, Rendel; **Mingana**, Alphonse. 1920. *The Odes and Psalms of Solomon: The Translation: With Introduction and Notes*. Vol. 2. Manchester et al.: The University Press (H. M. Mc Kechnie).
- Hölscher**, Gustav. 1932. *Syrische Verskunst*. Leipziger semitistische Studien, NS, Vol. 5. Leipzig: Hinrichs.
- Horsley**, Samuel. 1845. *The Book of Psalms. Translated from the Hebrew: With Notes, Explanatory and Critical*. 4th ed. London: Longman, Brown, Green, and Longmans; F. & J. Rivington.
- Howard**, David M. 1997. *The Structure of Psalms 93–100*. Biblical and Judaic Studies, Vol. 5. Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns.
- Jeannin**, Jules Cécilien. 1924, 2009. *Mémoires Liturgiques Syriennes et Chaldéennes*, Vol. 1. Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press.
- Jennings**, Arthur Charles; **Lowe**, William Henry. 1884. *The Psalms*. Vol. 1. London: Macmillan.
- Jennings**, Arthur Charles. 1885. *The Psalms, with Introductions and Critical Notes*. Assisted in parts by Rev. W.H. Lowe. Second edition. Vol. 1. London: Macmillan.
- Johnson**, Scott Fitzgerald. 2020. “Chapter 10: Syriac Hymnography before Ephrem.” – *Hymns, Homilies, and Hermeneutics in Byzantium*. Eds. Sarah Gador-Whyte, Andrew Mellas. Byzantina Australiensia, Vol. 25. Leiden: Brill, 193–215.
- Joosten**, Jan. 2013. “The Old Testament Quotations in the Old Syriac and Peshitta Gospels: A Contribution to the Study of the Diatessaron.” – *Language and Textual History of the Syriac Bible: Collected Studies*. Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 223–246.
- Kaufman**, Stephen A. 1984. “On vowel reduction in Aramaic.” – *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, Vol. 104, No. 1, 87–95.
- Keating**, Corey. 2001. *Exegesis of Psalm 19*. Phoenix Extension: Fuller Theological Seminary.
- Kidner**, Derek. 2014. *Psalms 1–72*. Downers Grove, Ill.: Intervarsity Press.
- Kiraz**, George A. et al., eds. 2011. *e-GEDSH. Gorgias Encyclopedic Dictionary of the Syriac Heritage: Electronic Edition*. <https://gedsh.bethmardutho.org/index.html>
- Kissane**, Edward J. 1953. *The Book of Psalms. Translated from a Critically Revised Hebrew Text with a Commentary*, Vol. 1. Dublin: Browne & Nolan.
- Kissane**, Edward J. 1954. *The Book of Psalms. Translated from a Critically Revised Hebrew Text with a Commentary*, Vol. 2. Dublin: Browne & Nolan.
- Knudsen**, Ebbe E. 2015. *Classical Syriac Phonology*. Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press.
- Kraus**, Hans-Joachim. 1978. *Psalmen*. 5. Aufl. Biblischer Kommentar. Altes Testament, Vol. 15. Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag.
- Kraus**, Hans-Joachim. 1993. *Psalms. A Continental Commentary*. Vol. 1–2. Minneapolis: Fortress Press.
- Kselman**, John S. 1988. “Psalm 146 in Its Context.” – *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly*, Vol. 50, No. 4, 588–599.
- Kugel**, James L. 1981. *The Idea of Biblical Poetry. Parallelism and Its History*. New Haven, London: Yale University Press.
- Leiden edition 1972** = *The Old Testament in Syriac According to the Peshitta Version, Part IV, Fasc. 6. Canticles or Odes. Prayer of Manasseh. Apocryphal Psalms. Psalms of Solomon. Tobit. I(3) Esdras*. The Peshitta Institute, ed. Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1980.
- Leiden edition 1980** = *The Old Testament in Syriac According to the Peshitta Version, Part II, Fasc. 3. The Book of Psalms*. The Peshitta Institute, ed. Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1980.

- Levin, Christoph.** 2016. "The edition of the Psalm of Ascents." – *Centres and Peripheries in the Early Second Temple Period*. Eds. Ehud Ben Zvi, Christoph Levin. Forschungen zum Alten Testament, Vol. 108. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 381–400.
- Lewis, Clive Staples.** 1958. *Reflections on the Psalms*. San Francisco: HarperCollins.
- Loretz, Oswald; Kottsieper, Ingo.** 1987. *Colometry in Ugaritic and Biblical Poetry: Introduction, Illustrations and Topical Bibliography*. Ugaritisch-biblische Literatur, Vol. 5. Altenberge: CIS-Verlag.
- Lowth, Robert.** 1847. *Lectures on the Sacred Poetry of the Hebrews*. Translated from the Latin by G. Gregory. London: S. Chadwick & Co.
- Lugt, Pieter van der.** 2006. *Cantos and Strophes in Biblical Hebrew Poetry: with Special Reference to the First Book of the Psalter*. Oudtestamentische Studiën, Vol. 53. Leiden, Boston: Brill.
- Lugt, Pieter van der.** 2010. *Cantos and Strophes in Biblical Hebrew Poetry II: Psalms 42–89*. Oudtestamentische Studiën, Vol. 57. Leiden, Boston: Brill.
- Lugt, Pieter van der.** 2014. *Cantos and Strophes in Biblical Hebrew Poetry III: Psalms 90–150 and Psalm I*. Oudtestamentische Studiën, Vol. 63. Leiden, Boston: Brill.
- Maré, Leonard P.** 2006. "Psalm 8: God's glory and humanity's reflected glory." – *Old Testament Essays*, Vol. 19, No. 3, 926–938.
- Margalit, Baruch.** 1975. "Studia Ugaritica I." – *Ugarit-Forschungen*, Vol. 7, 289–313.
- Martin, Jean Pierre Paulin.** 1879. *De la métrique chez les Syriens*. Vol. 2. Leipzig: Brockhaus.
- Mayer, Isaac Gantwerk.** 2020. תהלים קנ"ה | Psalms 155, according to the Nusah of the Judean Desert Scrolls. Edited, Vocalized, Cantillated, and Translated into English – *The Open Siddur Project* הפתוח הסדור פרויקט. <https://opensiddur.org/readings-and-sourcetexts/mekorot/non-canonical/exoteric/second-temple-period/psalms-155-according-to-the-nusah-of-the-judean-desert-scrolls-by-isaac-gantwerk-mayer/>.
- McCarthy, John J.** 1994. "The Phonetics and Phonology of Semitic Pharyngeals." – *Phonological Structure and Phonetic Form*. Ed. Patricia A. Keating. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 191–233.
- McCreesh, Thomas Patrick.** 1991. *Biblical Sound and Sense: Poetic Sound Patterns in Proverbs 10–29*. Journal for the Old Testament. Supplement Series, Vol. 128. Sheffield: JSOT press.
- Moretsi, H. Lekgetho.** 2019. *Translation Technique and the Translation of Verbal Forms in the Masoretic Text by the Peshitta Psalms 73–89*. PhD dissertation. Potchefstroom Campus: North-West University.
- Müller, Buks A.** 1988. "Psalm 8." – *Riglyne vir prediking oor die Psalms*. Kaapstad: N. G. Kerk-Uitgewers.
- Muraoka, Takamitsu.** 2005, 2013. *Classical Syriac. Basic Grammar with a Chrestomathy*. Porta Linguarium Orientalium, NS, Vol. 19. Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz.
- Murphy, James G.** 1875. *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Psalms*. Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark.
- Mushayabasa, Godwin.** 2014. *Translation Technique in the Peshitta to Ezekiel 1–24. A Frame Semantics Approach*. Studia Semitica Neerlandica, Vol. 63. Leiden: Brill.
- Nieten, Ulrike Rebekka.** 2013. *Struktur und Metrum in den syrisch-aramäischen Psalmen und Hymnen*. Semitica et semitohamitica Berolinensia, Vol. 12. Aachen: Shaker Verlag.
- Nöldeke, Theodor; Euting, Julius** 1904. *Compendious Syriac Grammar, with a Table of Characters by Julius Euting*. Translated from the 2d and Improved German Ed. by James Crichton. London: Williams & Norgate.

- Nöldeke**, Theodor. 1966. *Kurzgefasste Syrische Grammatik*. Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft.
- Nōmmik**, Urmas; **Pöldsam**, Anu. 2018. "Psalm 86, Its Place in the Psalter, and Group Identity in the Second Temple Period." – *Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft*, Vol. 130, No. 3, 398–417.
- Nōmmik**, Urmas. 2012. "The Idea of Ancient Hebrew Verse." – *Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft*, Vol. 124, No. 3, 400–408.
- Nōmmik**, Urmas. 2016. "Qinah Meter: From Genre Periphery to Theological Center – A Sketch." – *Centres and Peripheries in the Early Second Temple Period*. Eds. Christoph Levin, Ehud Ben Zvi. Forschungen zum Alten Testament, Vol. 108. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 411–436.
- Noth**, Martin. 1930. "Die fünf syrisch überlieferten apokryphen Psalmen." – *Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft*, Vol. 48, No. 1, 1–23.
- Oesterley**, William Oscar Emil. 1962. *The Psalms. Translated with Text-Critical and Exegetical Notes*. London: S.P.C.K.
- Pajunen**, Mika S. 2021. "Psalms 151–155." – *The Oxford Handbook of the Apocrypha*. Ed. Gerbern S. Oegema. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 423–450.
- Parallel Plus** = *Parallel plus by TheBible.org*. <https://thebible.org/gt/index>.
- Peursen**, Wido Th. van. 2007. *Language and Interpretation in the Syriac Text of Ben Sira: A Comparative Linguistic and Literary Study*. Monographs of the Peshitta Institute, Vol. 16 Leiden: Brill.
- Reindl**, Joseph. 1981. "Gotteslob als "Weisheitslehre". Zur Auslegung von Psalm 146." – *Dein Wort Beachten. Alttestamentliche Aufsätze*. Eds. Joseph Reindl, Georg Hentschel. Leipzig: St. Benno Verlag, 116–135.
- Reinink**, Gerrit J.; **Vanstiphout**, Herman L. J., eds. 1991. *Dispute Poems and Dialogues in the Ancient and Mediaeval Near East. Forms and Types of Literary Debates in Semitic and Related Literatures*. Orientalia Lovaniensia analecta, Vol. 42. Leuven: Peeters.
- Rodrigues Pereira**, Alphonso, S. 1997. *Studies in Aramaic Poetry (C. 100 B.C.E.–c. 600 C.E.)*. Studia Semitica Neerlandica, Vol. 34. Assen: Van Gorcum.
- Rooy**, Harry F. van. 1993. "Psalm 155: one, two or three texts?" – *Revue de Qumran*, Vol. 61, 109–122.
- Ross**, Allen P. 2011. *A Commentary on the Psalms, Vol. 3 (90–150)*. Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Academic.
- Rudnig**, Thilo Alexander. 2024. "Die syrischen Psalmen 151–155." – *Bibliothek antiker jüdischer und christlicher Literatur. Texte aus der Entstehungszeit der Bibel*. Ed. Jürgen Wehnert. Leiden: Brill, J. Schönningh, 571–584.
- Sáenz-Badillos**, Angel. 1988. *Historia de La Lengua Hebrea*. Colección Estudios orientales. Sabadell: Editorial AUSA.
- Sanders**, James Alvin. 1965. *The Psalms Scroll of Qumrân Cave 11 (11QPsa)*. Discoveries in the Judaean Desert, Vol. 4. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Seybold**, Klaus. 1978. *Die Wallfahrtspsalmen. Studien zur Entstehungsgeschichte von Psalm 120–134*. Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag.
- Seybold**, Klaus. 1990. *Introducing the Psalms*. Edinburgh: T & T Clark.
- Seybold**, Klaus. 1996. *Die Psalmen*. Handbuch zum Alten Testament, Vol. I.15. Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck).
- Seybold**, Klaus. 2003. *Poetik der Psalmen*. Poetologische Studien zum Alten Testament, Vol. 1. Stuttgart: Kohlhammer.
- Soggin**, J. Alberto. 1971. "Textkritische Untersuchung von Ps. VIII vv. 2–3 und 6." – *Vetus Testamentum*, Vol. 21, No. 5, 565–571.

- Sokoloff**, Michael. 2002. *A Dictionary of Jewish Babylonian Aramaic of the Talmudic and Geonic Periods*. Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Sprengrling**, Martin. 1916. "Antonius Rhetor on versification." – *The American Journal of Semitic Languages and Literatures*, Vol. 32, No. 3, 145–216.
- Stevenson**, Paul S. 2015. *Stanzaic Syntax in the Madrashe of Ephrem the Syrian*. Monographs of the Peshitta Institute Amsterdam, Vol. 22. Leiden, Boston: Brill.
- Tate**, Marvin E. 1990. *Psalms 51–100*. Word Biblical Commentary, Vol. 20. Dallas, TX: Word Books.
- Tauberschmidt**, Gerhard. 2005. "Considerations for OT Translation." – *Journal of Translation*, Vol. 1, No. 1, 61–73.
- Taylor**, Richard A.; **Kiraz**, Geroqe Anton; **Bali**, Joseph. 2020. *Psalms*. The Syriac Peshitta Bible with English Translation. Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press.
- Terrien**, Samuel L. 2003. *The Psalms. Strophic Structure and Theological Commentary*. Cambridge, MI: William B. Eerdmans.
- Tov**, Emanuel. 2012. *Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible*. 3rd ed. rev. & expanded. Minneapolis: Fortress Press.
- Tov**, Emanuel. 2015. "The Background of the Stichometric Arrangements of Poetry in the Judean Desert Scrolls." – Emmanuel Tov, *Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible, Qumran, Septuagint. Collected Essays*, Vol. 3. Vetus Testamentum. Supplements, Vol. 167. Leiden, Boston: Brill, 325–336.
- Tov**, Emanuel. 2018. *Scribal Practices and Approaches Reflected in the Texts Found in the Judean Desert*. Studies on the Texts of the Desert of Judah, Vol. 54. Leiden, Boston: Brill.
- Tsumura**, David Toshio. 2023. *Vertical Grammar of Parallelism in Biblical Hebrew*. Ancient Israel and Its Literature, Vol. 47. Atlanta: SBL Press.
- Turek**, Przemysław. 2010. "The 30th Ode of Solomon as the Oldest Example of the Great Syriac Poetry and the Development of Syriac Prosody." – *Orientalia Christiana Cracoviensia*, Vol. 2, 109–120.
- Vorndran**, Jürgen. 2002. *Alle Völker werden kommen. Studien zu Psalm 86*. Bonner Biblische Beiträge, Vol. 133. Berlin: Philo.
- Vos**, Casparus Johannes Adam; **Olivier**, Gerrit Cornelius. 2002. "Die Psalms in die liturgie met verwysing na Psalm 8 as liedteks." – *HTS: Theological Studies*, Vol. 58, No. 4, 1431–1446.
- Waltner**, James H. 2006. *Psalms: Believers Church Bible Commentary*. Scottdale: Herald Press.
- Watson**, Wilfred G. E. 1984. *Classical Hebrew Poetry. A Guide to Its Techniques*. Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series, Vol. 26. Sheffield: JSOT Press.
- Watson**, Wilfred G. E. 2009. *Classical Hebrew Poetry. A Guide to Its Techniques*. The Library of Hebrew Bible / Old Testament Studies. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press.
- Watt**, John W. 1986. *The Fifth Book of the Rhetoric of Antony of Tagrit*. Lovanii: Peeters.
- Weitzman**, Michael. 1999. *The Syriac Version of the Old Testament. An Introduction*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Westermann**, Claus, 1981. *Praise and Lament in the Psalms*. Translated by Keith R. Crim, Richard N. Soulen. Atlanta, GE: John Knox.
- Wischnowsky**, Marc. 2001. *Die Tochter Zion: Aufnahme und Überwindung der Stadtklage in den Prophetenschriften des Alten Testaments*. Wissenschaftliche Monographien zum Alten und Neuen Testament, Vol. 89. Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag.
- Woude**, Adam Simon van der *et al.*, 1974. "Die fünf syrischen Psalmen." – *Jüdische Schriften aus hellenistisch-römischer Zeit. Band 4: Poetische Schriften*. Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 31–47.

- Würthwein**, Ernst; **Fischer**, Alexander A. 2014. *The Text of the Old Testament: An Introduction to the Biblia Hebraica*. Third edition. Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans.
- Würthwein**, Ernst. 1988, 1995. *The Text of the Old Testament. An Introduction to the Biblia Hebraica*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans.
- Wyk**, Wouter C. van. 1978. “The Peshitta of the Song of Songs.” – *OTWSA*, Vol. 20 & 21 (*Old Testament Essays*), 181–189.

SUMMARY IN ESTONIAN

Pešitta psalmide poeetilised tunnusjooned: heebrea ja süüria psalmide võrdlev analüüs

Käesolevas uurimuses käsitletakse heebrea psalmide Pešitta süüria tõlkes kasutatud poeetilisi tunnusjooni ja tõlketehnikat, keskendudes stroofide piiritlemisele, värssideks jagunemisele, sõnakordustele, alliteratsioonile, domineerivale kõlale, mõtte-riimile ja väiksematele poeetilistele võtetele. Uurimuse eesmärk on analüüsida põhjalikult psalmitõlke poeetist profiili, uurides heebrea teksti poeetika mõju süüria tõlkele ning heites valgust Pešitta tõlke kunstilistele nüanssidele.

Doktoritöös keskendutakse üksikasjalikult valitud psalmidele, mis pärinevad erinevatest psalmiraamatutest ja üks veel lisaks apokrüüfsete psalmide hulgast. Valitud psalmid on 8, 19, 29, 86, 96, 120, 124, 146 ja apokrüüfne 155. Valikut mõjutasid ühised lugemised ja arutelud juhendajatega, võttes arvesse iga psalmi teemasid, iseloomujooni ja kontekste.

Psalmid 8, 19, 29, 96 ja 146 on hümnid, mis valiti välja nende üleva stiili ja erinevate poeetiliste ja stiilifiguuride potentsiaali tõttu. Psalmi 8 iseloomustab tugev kontsentriiline muster ning seda tõlgendatakse kui hümnide, tarkuse ja kaebelaulude kombinatsiooni. Psalmis 19 luuakse kolme erineva motiivi abil terviklik tarkuskirjanduslik hümn, mida on tõstetud esile kui ühte psalmiraamatu kauneimat hümn. Psalm 29 sisaldab hümnilikke jooni, mille hulka kuuluvad Jahve hääle korduv kõlamine ning viited taevasele kogunemisele ja jumalikule templile. Psalm 96 kasutab mitmesuguseid kirjanduslikke vahendeid ja nõuab hoolikat uurimist. Psalm 146 on jagatud kahte ossa ja see järgib kiituslaulu žanri ühes raamivate üleskutsetega Jumalat kiita.

Lisaks sisaldab kaebelaul Ps 86 erakordselt palju sõnakordust ja keerulist stiili, mis muudab selle tõlgendamise raskeks. Palverännakulaule Ps-des 120 ja 124 peetakse lühikeseks, aga kompleksseks. Psalm 120 on kaebus, mida saab mõista ka kui tänulaulu, samas kui Ps 124 on tänulaul, milles kasutatakse tugevaid poeetilisi võtteid. Lõpuks on Ps 155 apokrüüfne psalm, mis on tõlgitud heebrea keelest ja millel on palju sarnasusi Heebrea Piibli psalmidele. Selles sisalduvad tänu ja päästmise palve elemendid.

Iga psalmi uuritakse omaette peatükis eraldi. Peatükid jagunevad erinevaid aspekte käsitlevateks alapeatükkideks, milles edastatakse üldist infot, psalmide süüria ja heebrea versioonide tekstid, mis on varustatud tõlkega inglise keelde, stroofi-struktuuri käsitlelused, kvantitatiivne analüüs, mis tegeleb sõnade, silpide ja konsonantide arvu võrdleva ning sõnakorduste ja kõlapildi analüüsiga, ning lõpuks mõtteriimi ja süntaksi käsitlusi ja kokkuvõtet.

Dissertatsioonis kasutatakse süüria alustekstina Pešitta psalmide Leideni editiooni ning heebrea alustekstina *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia* editiooni. Aeg-ajalt pööratakse tähelepanu ka tekstikriitikale, et nii Pešitta kui heebrea psalmide poeetiliste nüansside analüüs oleks kaalutletum.

Doktoritöö esmane eesmärk on põhjendada süüria teksti jagunemist kompositsioonilisteks ühikuteks, mida tavaliselt tuntakse stroofide nime all. Stroofe identifitseeritakse stroofimarkerite abil. Teksti aitavad stroofideks jagada poeetilised võtted nagu mõtteriim, sõnapaarid, kordused, kõlakujundid, semantiline ja temaatiline ühtsus, inklusioon, stroofisulg ja kiasm. Autor võrdleb tulemusi klassikalise süüria poetikaga ja markerib sarnasusi ja erinevusi. Pešitta psalme võib nimetada kindlasti luuleks, ehkki need ei vasta veel klassikalise süüria luule vormikaanonile.

Kvantitatiivse analüüsi vahendina kasutatakse silpide loendamist, sõnade loendamist ja kolomeetriat, seda nii süüria kui ka heebrea tekstide puhul. Kuigi klassikalist süüria luulet iseloomustab isosüllaabiline meetriline muster (silpide arv koolonites on võrdne), näitab käesolev uurimus, et kuigi Pešitta psalmid ei sisalda igas värsis võrdset silpide arvu, ei välista see nende poeetilist olemust. Arvatakse, et enne 4. sajandit võis süüria luule sisaldada heterosüllaabilisi meetrilisi mustreid (silpide arv koolonites varieerub). Doktoritöös püstitatakse tees, et süüria psalme tuleks liigitada luuleks, mis mahub süllaabilise meetrumi kategooriasse, aga hõlmab mitut laadi meetrumeid, sealhulgas lihtsat, kahekordset ja kombineeritud meetrumit. Seega näitab käesolev uurimus, et heterosüllaabilise meetrumiga psalme võib pidada luuleks, hoolimata nende kõrvalekaldumisest klassikalisest isosüllaabilisest meetrumist. Psalmide uurimine annab tulemuseks selle, et tasakaalustamata pikkusega stroofid korduvad tähelepanuväärse sagedusega. Sellel taustal paistavad aga Ps-d 120 ja 155 eriliselt silma, sest nende poeetiline struktuur sisaldab näiteid nii tasakaalus kui ka kergelt tasakaalustamata stroofidest.

Silpide, sõnade ja konsonantide arvu analüüs käesolevas uurimuses viitab sellele, et süüria tekstis on koolonite ja värside silpide ja sõnade arvude vahemikud väiksemad kui kolomeetriline varieerumine. Doktoritöö näitab, et süüria psalmides on oma eripärased stiilielemendid, nagu näiteks heterosüllaabiline meetriline muster, ja neil on potentsiaali areneda klassikalise süüria luule suunas. Nagu võis eeldada, on heebrea teksti kolomeetriline tasakaal suurem kui süüria tekstis, võimalik et tõlkimise stiili ja süüria keele eripärase väljendusviisi tõttu. Ei süüria ega heebrea versioonid vasta täiesti isosüllaabilisele meetrumile, küll aga annavad tunnistust tendentsist kasutada koolonites ja värssides üsna sarnast silpide arvu, millele lisaks paistab silma tendents kasutada kolme kuni nelja sõna kooloni kohta.

Dissertatsioon näitab, et süüria tekst kaldub mõnikord kõrvale sellest, kuidas jaguneb värssideks heebrea tekst, kuid järgib siiski enamasti heebrea sõnajärge. Stroofid sisaldavad 2–12 koolonit. Kui võrrelda tulemusi heebrea psalmidega, siis viimastes mahub koolonite arv 2 ja 16 vahele. Käesolevas uurimuses on analüüsitud ka sõnade arvu koolonites, värssides ja stroofides. Süüria psalmides kasutatud sõnade arv jääb vahemikku 1–7 ja heebrea tekstis kasutatud sõnade arv vahemikku 2–6. Uurimine näitab, et süüria ja heebrea psalmides on mõnikord värsse, milles on sama arv sõnu.

Kuigi mõtteriim ei ole süüria luule silmapaistev tunnus, on seda Pešitta psalmides järjekindlalt rakendatud, tõenäoliselt tänu sellele, et tõlkija on heebrea psalmide tekste tõetruult edasi andnud. Alliteratsioon mängib olulist rolli nii süüria kui ka heebrea versioonides, rõhutades nende stroofilist iseloomu. Kuigi süüria tõlkija

kasutab alliteratsiooni sarnaselt, lisab ta sellele siiski oma iseloomuliku nüansi. Süüria psalmides on alliteratsioon ka intensiivsem kui heebrea keeles. Sõnakorduste analüüs näitab, et nii süüria kui ka heebrea tekstides esineb kokku võrdne arv kordusi, kuid nende jaotumine stroofide sees ja vahel on erinev.

Kokkuvõttes näitab käesolev doktoritöö, et Pešitta psalmides on mitmeid poeetilisi võtteid, mis annavad mõista, et tõlkija oli teadlik heebrea tekstis kasutatud poeetilisest võtetest nagu parallelism, sõnakordus, alliteratsioon ja teatud konkreetsete võtete kasutamine stroofide tähistamiseks. Süüria tõlkija kasutas neid võtteid siiski erinevalt, võttes arvesse süüria keele süntaktilist ja struktuurilist erinevust. Sisuliselt selgema tõlke tagamiseks on süüria tõlkija teinud kohandusi. Mõlemas tekstiversioonis rakendatakse oskuslikult kiasmi, stroofisulgu ja inkluusiooni, mis aitavad markeerida stroofe ning raamida psalme esteetiliselt. Süüria tekstil on suurem rütmitunnetus ja voolavus, mis suurendab selle kõitvust. Meetriliste mustrite osas arvestatakse heebrea tekstis rohkem kolomeetrilise tasakaaluga. Süüria tekst seevastu tugineb meetrilise järjepidevuse saavutamiseks silpide arvestamisele, kuigi teatud värssides on täheldatav mõningane kolomeetiline tasakaal. Süüria tõlkija teadlikkuse kohta kolomeetriast ei saa teha üheseid järeldusi. Uurimuse tulemusena on selgunud, et Pešitta psalmide koolonites ei ole silpide arvud ühesugused, millest tulenevalt võib järeldada, et Pešitta psalmides domineerib tasakaalustamata segavärsiline luule, ehkki esineb mitmeid värse ja stroofe, mis on lähedal isosüllaabilisele meetrumile.

CURRICULUM VITAE

Name: Amir Vasheghanifarahani
Date of Birth: 11 August 1987
Place of Birth: Karaj, Iran
Contact: arshavinfarahani@yahoo.com

Education:

2018 – present day PhD studies in Theology and Religious Studies, School of Theology and Religious Studies, Faculty of Humanities and Arts, University of Tartu, topic: “Poetical Features of the Peshitta Psalter: A Comparative Study of the Hebrew and Syriac Psalms,” supervised by Prof. Urmas Nõmmik
2011–2014 Master in Ancient Languages and Cultures, University of Shahid Behesti, Tehran, Iran, thesis: “An Analytical Comparative Survey of Yasna based on Zand,” advised by Dr. Mujtaba Monshizadeh
2005–2010 BA in Russian Translation, University of Mazandaran, Mazandaran Province, Iran

Research, Teaching and Mentorship:

2022–2023 Junior Research Fellow in Semitic Studies (0,5), University of Tartu, Faculty of Arts and Humanities, School of Theology and Religious Studies
2020–2023 Member of research staff of the Estonian Research Council project PRG938 “The Emergence of the Biblical Book of Job on the Backdrop of the so-called Job Literature” (1.01.2020–31.12.2024)
2015–2017 Teacher of Persian and Arabic Literature, Salman Farsi High School, Tehran, Iran

Acknowledgments:

2018–2022 Dora Plus PhD Scholarship
2019–2020 Dora Plus Doctoral Students’ Mobility (Research Journey to the University of Göttingen)

Memberships:

Society of Biblical Literature (SBL)
European Association of Biblical Studies (EABS)

- Publications: 2023: “Strophes in Peshitta Psalms? A Study of Selected Examples.” – *Studia Metrica et Poetica*, 10 (1), 69–87. DOI: 10.12697/smp.2023.10.1.03
- 2024: “Psalm 29 as a Poetological Example of Peshitta Psalms Translation.” – *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies*, 80 (1). DOI: 10.4102/hts.v80i1.9389

Conference Papers and Presentations:

- 2019 EABS, Warsaw, “Poetological Translation Technique in the Peshitta Psalms 8, 19 and 86”
- 2019 OTSEM, London, “The Peshitta Psalm 19 as a Poetological Example of the Translation Technique”
- 2019 IOSOT, Aberdeen, “Poetology of Peshitta Psalm 19: A Poetical Example of Translation”
- 2022 Symposium Syriacum, Paris, “Poetology of the Peshitta Psalm 124: A Poetical Example of Translation”
- 2022 IOSOT, Zürich, “Poetology of Peshitta Psalm 146: Poetical Example of Translation”

ELULOOKIRJELDUS

Nimi: Amir Vasheghanifarrahani
Sünniaeg: 11. august 1987
Sünnikoht: Karaj, Iraan
Meiliaadress: arshavinfarrahani@yahoo.com

Haridus:

2018–praeguseni Doktoriõpingud, usuteaduskond, humanitaarteaduste ja kunstide valdkond, Tartu Ülikool, teema: „Pešitta psalmide poeetilised tunnusjooned: Heebrea ja süüria psalmide võrdlev analüüs“, juhendaja prof Urmas Nõmmik

2011–2014 Magistrikraad vanade keelte ja kultuuride alal, Shahid Behesti Ülikool, Teheran, Iraan, teema: „Zandil põhinev Yasna võrdlev analüütiline uurimus“, juhendaja dr Mujtaba Monshizadeh

2005–2010 Bakalaureusekraad vene keele tõlkimise alal, Mazandarani Ülikool, Mazandarani provints, Iraan

Teadus- ja õpetamistegevus:

2022–2023 Semitistika nooremteadur (0,5), usuteaduskond, humanitaarteaduste ja kunstide valdkond, Tartu Ülikool

2020–2023 Eesti Teadusagentuuri teadusgrandi PRG938 „Piibli Iiobi raamatu tekkelugu nn Iiobi kirjanduse taustal“ (1.01.2020–31.12.2024) täitja

2015–2017 Pärsia ja araabia kirjanduse õpetaja, Salman Farsi Keskkool, Teheran, Iraan

Tunnustused:

2018–2022 Dora Plussi doktoriõppe stipendium

2019–2020 Dora Plussi doktorantide õpirände stipendium (viibimine Göttingeni Ülikoolis)

Liikmelisus: Society of Biblical Literature (SBL)
European Association of Biblical Studies (EABS)

Publikatsioonid: 2023: „Strophes in Peshitta Psalms? A Study of Selected Examples“ [„Stroofid Pešitta psalmides? Valitud näidete analüüs“] – *Studia Metrica et Poetica*, 10 (1), 69–87. DOI: 10.12697/smp.2023.10.1.03

2024: “Psalm 29 as a Poetological Example of Peshitta Psalms Translation” [„Psalm 29 kui Pešitta psalmitõlke näide“] – *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies*, 80 (1). DOI: 10.4102/hts.v80i1.9389

Konverentsiettekanded:

- 2019 EABS, Varssavi, “Poetological Translation Technique in the Peshitta Psalms 8, 19 and 86” [„Poeetiline tõlketehnika Pešitta Psalmides 8, 19 ja 86“]
- 2019 OTSEM, London, “The Peshitta Psalm 19 as a Poetological Example of the Translation Technique” [„Pešitta Psalm 19 kui tõlketehnika poeetika näide“]
- 2019 IOSOT, Aberdeen, “Poetology of Peshitta Psalm 19: A Poetical Example of Translation” [„Pešitta Psalmi 19 poeetika: tõlkimise poeetika näide“]
- 2022 Symposium Syriacum, Pariis, “Poetology of the Peshitta Psalm 124: A Poetical Example of Translation” [„Pešitta Psalmi 124 poeetika: tõlkimise poeetika näide“]
- 2022 IOSOT, Zürich, “Poetology of Peshitta Psalm 146: Poetical Example of Translation” [„Pešitta Psalmi 146 poeetika: tõlkimise poeetika näide“]

DISSERTATIONES THEOLOGIAE UNIVERSITATIS TARTUENSIS

1. **Tarmo Kulmar.** Die Theologie der Kraft-, Götter- und Seelenvorstellungen der ältesten Schicht der estnischen Urreligion. Tartu, 1994, Autorreferat, 45 S.
2. **Toomas Paul.** Die Geschichte der estnischen Bibelübersetzung, I Teil (XVI–XIX Jahrhundert). Tartu, 1994, Autorreferat, 27 S.
3. **Kalle Kasemaa.** Semitistik ja poeetikat. Tartu, 1997, 131 lk.
4. **Arne Hiob.** Uku Masingu religioonifilosoofia põhijooned. Tartu, 2000, 186 lk.
5. **Riho Altnurme.** Eesti Evangeeliumi Luteriusu Kirik ja Nõukogude riik 1944–1949. Tartu, 2000, 326 lk.
6. **Pille Valk.** Eesti kooli religiooniõpetuse kontseptsioon. Tartu, 2003, 209 lk.
7. **Peeter Roosimaa.** Uue Testamendi eestikeelsetest tõlgetest ja tõlkimist toetavast eksegeesist. Tartu, 2004, 242 lk.
8. **Einike Pilli.** Terviklik elukestva õppe kontseptsioon Eesti protestantlike koguduste kontekstis. Tartu, 2005, 265 lk.
9. **Lea Altnurme.** Kristlusest oma usuni. Uurimus muutustest eestlaste religioossuses 20. sajandi II poolel. Tartu, 2005, 329 lk.
10. **Aira Võsa.** Johann Georg Gichtel – teosoofilise idee kandja varauusaegses Euroopas. Tartu, 2006, 311 lk.
11. **Veiko Vihuri.** Hugo Bernhard Rahamägi, Eesti Evangeelse Luterliku Kiriku teine piiskop 1934–1939. Tartu, 2007, 364 lk.
12. **Kaido Soom.** Täiskasvanute leeritöö Eesti Evangeelses Luterlikus Kirikus ja selle arengustrategia koostamine. Tartu, 2007, 242 lk.
13. **Meelis Friedenthal.** Tallinna Linnaarhiivi *Tractatus moralis de oculo*. Tartu, 2008, 206 lk.
14. **Andrei Sõtšov.** Eesti Õigeusu Piiskopkond Nõukogude religioonipoliitika mõjuväljas 1954–1964. Tartu, 2008, 208 lk.
15. **Jaan Lahe.** Gnosis und Judentum. Alttestamentliche und jüdische Motive in der gnostischen Literatur und das Ursprungsproblem der Gnosis. Tartu, 2009, 412 S.
16. **Roland Karo.** Eros & Mysticism. Are Mystical States of Consciousness Evolutionary Byproducts of Sexual Response? Tartu, 2009, 237 p.
17. **Olga Schihalejev.** Estonian young people, religion and religious diversity: personal views and the role of the school. Tartu, 2009, 256 p.
18. **Ingmar Kurg.** Oikumeenilise evangelisatsiooni perspektiiv Euroopa kontekstis: missioloogiline ja religioonisotsioloogiline uurimus. Tartu, 2010, 354 lk.
19. **Peeter Espak.** The God Enki in Sumerian Royal Ideology and Mythology. Tartu, 2010, 284 p.
20. **Piret Lotman.** Heinrich Stahli pastoraalne tegevus Rootsi Läänemere provintsis 17. sajandi esimesel poolel. Tartu, 2011, 180 lk.

21. Kaarina Rein. Arstiteadus rootsiaegses Tartu gümnaasiumis ja ülikoolis aastatel 1630–1656. Meditsiinalased disputatsioonid ja oratsioonid ning nende autorid. Tartu, 2011, 198 lk.
22. Ain Riistan. Ajalooline Jeesus: teaduse probleem religiooni kontekstis. Tartu, 2011, 301 lk.
23. Ringo Ringvee. Riik ja religioon nõukogudejärgses Eestis 1991–2008. Tartu, 2011, 234 lk.
24. Atko Rimmel. Religioonivastane võitlus Eesti NSV-s aastail 1957–1990. Tähtsamad institutsioonid ja nende tegevus. Tartu, 2011, 324 lk.
25. **Anu Põldsam**. Lazar Gulkowitsch – eine vergessene Stimme der Wissenschaft des Judentums. Tartu, 2011, 293 S.
26. **Priit Rohtmets**. Teoloogilised voolud Eesti evangeeliumi Luteri usu kirikus aastatel 1917–1934. Tartu, 2012, 488 lk.
27. **Maire Latvala**. Koguduslik hingehoid Eesti nelja konfessiooni näitel. Tartu, 2012, 309 lk.
28. **Raul Tiganik**. Sotsiaalne kontroll ja religioon. Tartu, 2013, 232 lk.
29. **Elo Süld**. Muhammad, der Gesandte Gottes, und Paulus, der Gesandte Christi. Ein Vergleich der Berufungs- und offenbarungsgeschichtlichen Vorstellungen mit Bezug auf die islamische sowie die biblische Tradition. Tartu, 2014, 301 S.
30. **Mart Jaanson**. Nikaia-Konstantinoopoli usutunnistuse ladinakeelse normteksti grammatiline, teoloogiline ja muusikaline liigendamine. Tartu, 2014, 371 lk.
31. **Erki Lind**. The Concept of the Body in Chinese and Indian Bodily Practices: Transformation, Perspective, and Ethics. Tartu, 2015, 371 p.
32. **Marko Uibu**. Religiosity as Cultural Toolbox: A Study of Estonian New Spirituality. Tartu, 2016, 258 p.
33. **Liina Eek**. Tänapäeva eestikeelsete õigeusklike katehheesist ja uskumustest. Tartu, 2017, 246 lk.
34. **Marju Lepajõe**. Pastorid ja kirjakultuur: kristliku humanismi variatsioonidest Eesti- ja Liivimaal XVII sajandi esimesel poolel. Tartu, 2017, 330 lk.
35. **Liidia Meel**. Interdisciplinary team based pastoral care model for Estonian healthcare institutions. Tartu, 2018, 192 p.
36. **Ege Lepa**. Eesti islamikogukonna dünaamika pärast taasiseseisvumist. Tartu, 2019, 207 lk.
37. **Andreas Johandi**. The god Asar/Asalluḫi in the early Mesopotamian pantheon. Tartu, 2019, 277 p.
38. **Indrek Peedu**. Positioning the Scholar: Issues of Epistemology and Methodology in the Evolutionary Study of Religion. Tartu, 2019, 247 p.
39. **Liina Kilemit**. Kristlike kogudustega liitumise põhjustest. Tartu, 2020, 186 lk.
40. **Tiina-Erika Friedenthal**. Võitlus ja väitlus teatri üle Eesti- ja Liivimaal 18. sajandi lõpus ja 19. sajandi alguses. Tartu, 2020, 472 lk.
41. **Triin Käpp**. Kristlik väärtuskasvatus kristlikes koolides ning kristlike koolide roll Eesti ühiskonnas 21. sajandi algul. Tartu, 2021, 205 lk.
42. **Silja Härm**. Eesti gümnaasiumiastme usundiõpetuse õpetajate professionaalsed valikud usundiõpetuse õpetamisel. Tartu, 2021, 183 lk.

43. **Helle Kaasik.** Sacred medicine from the forest: chemical, psychological and spiritual aspects of ayahuasca. Tartu, 2022, 170 p.
44. **Hedi Vilumaa.** Avatud sõna- ja sakramendiosadus. Ristitud laste ja noorte armulaua admissioon: kontekstid ja arusaamad Eesti luterlikus kirikus 1917–2005. Tartu, 2022, 356 lk.
45. **Ahenkora Siaw Kwakye.** Transcendence, as a Theme in Theology and Technology. Tartu, 2022, 273 p.
46. **Iakov Kadochnikov.** Deification of kings in Ancient Mesopotamia. Tartu, 2023, 367 p.
47. **Helen Haas.** Alevis in Contemporary Izmir: Imaginaries, Beliefs and Practices regarding Hacı Bektaş Veli. Tartu, 2023, 227 p.
48. **Imar Y. Koutchoukali.** “Our *‘irbīt* is not like your *‘arabiyya*”. Linguistic and Socio-Political Change in Late Antique South Arabia (550 – 850 AD). Tartu, 2023, 240 p.
49. **Üllas Linder.** Adam Reinhold Schiewe. Esimese Eesti baptistikoguduse rajaja elulugu. Tartu, 2024, 228 lk.
50. **Rain Soosaar.** The Process of Secularization in Rural Communes of Estonia and Latvia (1920–40). Tartu, 2024, 371 p.
51. **Indrek Pekko.** Eesti Evangeelne Luterlik Kirik aastatel 1991–2015 – muutused, identiteet ja teoloogilised hoiakud. Tartu, 2024, 214 lk.
52. **Indrek Linnuste.** Spirituaalse dimensiooni integreerimise võimalusest ja vajadusest tervishoiu- ja rehabilitatsioonisüsteemis. Tartu, 2025, 220 lk.