ABSTRACT

The problematic structure of Psalm 47, on which there is no consensus, comes under scrutiny in this study as it makes interpretation of some key themes in the psalm difficult. The main concern of this study is an analysis that will determine a working structure as the structure would in turn form the framework for the socio-historical interpretation of the text. The objective of this study is to determine a structure based on an analysis that takes as its point of departure the poetic techniques found within the psalm, followed by a syntactical, stichometric, and structural analysis of the poem. The poetic techniques within the psalm will be emphasised as they are key to understanding the structural layout of the poem.

INTRODUCTION

A cursory reading of Psalm 47 convinces the reader of its clarity: it is thematically coherent and verbs, nouns and pronominal suffixes refer to either the nations, God or Israel throughout the Psalm. The following themes occur repeatedly: exhortations that Elohim or God must be praised (vv. 2 and 7), Yahweh or God is King (vv. 3 and 8), God subjugates the nations under Israel and rules over them all (vv. 4 and 9), the covenant promise between God and Israel is extended to include all the nations (vv. 5 and 10), and Yahweh or Elohim is described as being exalted (vv. 6 and 10). Paradoxically, the same cursory reading presents the reader with a startling problem. The problematic structure of the psalm, on which there is no consensus, makes interpretation of some key themes in the psalm difficult.

The main concern of this study is an analysis that will determine a working structure for the psalm to aid the interpreter. Such a structure would in turn form the
framework for the socio-historical interpretation of the text. The objective of this study is to determine a structure based on an analysis that takes as its point of departure the poetic techniques found within the psalm, followed by a syntactical, stichometric, and structural analysis of the poem. The poetic techniques within the psalm will be emphasised as they are key to understanding the structural layout of the poem. It is the expectation that this analysis and the proposed structure will aid modern interpreters in understanding the ancient text in its socio-historical context by proposing a structural framework for such an interpretation.

TEXT AND TRANSLATION

Table 1: Text and translation of Psalm 47

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hebrew Text</th>
<th>Verse</th>
<th>Translation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>לְפָנֵי</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>For the supervisor. By the sons of Korah. A Psalm.²</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>כָּלָהִי</td>
<td>2 a</td>
<td>All the nations, you must clap your hand(s).³</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>כָּלָהִי</td>
<td>2 b</td>
<td>you must shout to God⁴ with a voice of joy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>כָּלָהִי</td>
<td>3 a</td>
<td>For Yahweh Almighty is fearsome,⁵</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>כָּלָהִי</td>
<td>3 b</td>
<td>a great king over all the earth.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>כָּלָהִי</td>
<td>4 a</td>
<td>He subjugates⁶ nations under us,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>כָּלָהִי</td>
<td>4 b</td>
<td>and peoples under our feet.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>כָּלָהִי</td>
<td>5 a</td>
<td>He chooses for us our inheritance,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>כָּלָהִי</td>
<td>5 b</td>
<td>the glory of Jacob, whom he loved. Selah.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>כָּלָהִי</td>
<td>6 a</td>
<td>God has gone up with a shout,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>כָּלָהִי</td>
<td>6 b</td>
<td>Yahweh with the sound of a ram’s horn.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>כָּלָהִי</td>
<td>7 a</td>
<td>You must praise God, you must praise.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>כָּלָהִי</td>
<td>7 b</td>
<td>You must praise our king, you must praise.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>כָּלָהִי</td>
<td>8 a</td>
<td>For the King of all the earth is God,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>כָּלָהִי</td>
<td>8 b</td>
<td>you must praise with insight.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

³ Singular, פָּנִי “hand”.
⁴ Kraus (1988:466) is of the opinion that הָאָזְיָה should be inserted in the Elohist Psalter, to represent the original reading. He proposes the same emendation in vv. 6, 8, 9 and 10. This study keeps to the reading found in Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia.
⁵ Niph’al active participle absolute state masculine singular of נְפָי “frightening, awesome.”
⁶ Briggs & Briggs (1969:398) write that the Aramaism יָדְרֶה is possibly a substitution for an earlier use of יָדָר. This is impossible to determine, but the text makes sense as it is.
There are many examples of poetic stratagems in this psalm. In this section they will be discussed on the levels of sounds, patterns, and semantics.

**Sounds**

(1) **Alliteration and assonance**
Examples of alliteration and assonance occur throughout the psalm, but are not of significant importance for the meaning of the psalm (cf. Rhyme below).

(2) **Rhyme**
Internal rhyme occurs in vv. 4 and 5a through repetition of the syllable –nu (נֻ). Note the repetition of the sound –im (יִמּ) in vv. 4 and 9. In v. 7 the word יִרְבּ occurs four times, again indicating the rhyme formed by the repetition of the u sound. Also note the syllable –nu (נֻ) at the end of לַעֲלֵה, also in v. 7. In v. 10 the ei sound occurs four times (יִבְי, יִבְי, יִבְי, יִבְי). The above are also all examples of homoioteleuton.

**Patterns**

(1) **Parallelism**
Verse 2a is parallel to v. 2b. Verse 2 is a synonymous parallelism. Both feet are concerned with the exhortation to the nations to praise God and the manner in which it should be done – with a clapping of the hand(s) and with a voice of joy. The object of praise is only indicated in the second foot of v. 2, namely God (cf. Prinsloo 1996:390; Schaper 1994:263).

Verse 3a is parallel to v. 3b. Verse 3 is a synonymous parallelism. God’s attributes are that he is fearsome and also king over all the earth. The particle כִּי serves as

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7 The following indicated parallelisms are proposed by the author. There are alternative proposed parallelistic structures for structuring the psalm, cf. Zucker (2007:167-170).

Verse 4a is parallel to v. 4b. Verse 4 is a synonymous parallelism (Schaper 1994:263) and is considered complementary by Muilenburg (1944:246). It describes God as a conqueror who upholds his covenant promise towards the Israelites (the descendants of Jacob). “nations” and “peoples” are parallel, as is “under us” to “under our feet”). The parallelism between these two feet are also emphasised by the internal rhyme that occurs between the aforementioned words (Prinsloo 1996:392). There is also an example of ellipsis in v. 4 as the verb of v. 4a is also implied in v. 4b. Prinsloo (1996:392) writes that “he chooses” (in v. 4a) is extended to “under us” (in v. 4b) to compensate for the omission of the verb in v. 4b. This poetic technique is called a “ballast variant”. Prinsloo (1996:392) also notes that there is a contrast formed between God and the nations through the writer’s use of prepositions, namely that God is high and exalted (髙) and that the nations are low and oppressed (低).

Verse 5a is parallel to v. 5b. The inheritance that God chooses for Israel (the land Canaan) in v. 5a is described as the glory of Jacob in v. 5b. God keeps to the covenant promise of giving Israel a land as he made it to Jacob. “Inheritance” and “glory of Jacob” are therefore poetically parallel to each other. The verb of v. 5a “to choose” is also applicable to v. 5b. Again we have an example of ellipsis. Prinsloo (1996:392) points out that as was the case in v. 4, there is also an example of a “ballast variant” in v. 5b – v. 5b is extended to compensate for the omission of “he chooses” (cf. Craigie 1983:349; Kraus 1988:468; Muilenburg 1944:240; Prinsloo 1996:392; Schaper 1994:263).

Verse 6a is parallel to v. 6b. Verse 6 is a synonymous parallelism. Military imagery, of shouting and the blowing of a ram’s horn, is used to proclaim the honour of God while he is ascending. Where he is ascending to is unclear form the text itself. “he choose” in v. 6a and “he chooses” in v. 6b are equated with each other and are parallel. Again, we have an example of a “ballast variant”, as the omission of the verb in v. 6a is compensated by explaining the manner in which Yahweh ascends more extensively in v. 6b (cf. Duhm 1899:133; Prinsloo 1996:393; Schaper 1994:266).

Verse 7a and v. 7b both contain a repetition of the exhortation to praise God and these two feet in turn form a parallelism. The repetition of the exhortation to praise God has as its purpose to emphasise the kingship of God (cf. Prinsloo 1996:394).
Verse 8a is parallel to v. 8b. Verse 8 is a synthetic parallelism (Schaper 1994:263). In v. 8a there is again a reference to God as king (as in v. 7b) and in v. 8b there is another exhortation to praise (as in v. 7b) (cf. Muilenburg 1944:240).

Verse 9a is parallel to v. 9b. Verse 9 is a synonymous parallelism. Both feet deal with God as ruler and his kingship. The subject in both of these lines is God. קָנָה כֹּלִים is also parallel to קָנָה כֹּלִים כֹּלִים. Note that קָנָה כֹּלִים is an example of a *hapax legomenon* (cf. Muilenburg 1944:240; Prinsloo 1996:395-396; Schaper 1994:263; van Uchelen 1977:51).

Verse 10a is parallel to v. 10b. Verse 10ab is an asynthetic parallelism (Schaper 1994:263). In v. 10ab the nations are said to be gathered alongside or with the nation of the God of Abraham. These two lines are parallel to each other as both contain construct forms which refer to the nobles of the nations and the shields of the earth. כֶּלֶם אֲלֵהִים and כֶּלֶם יָהֳעַי are synonymous. In v. 10b we have an example of ellipsis, as the verb used in v. 10a is omitted, but implied in v. 10b. We also have an example of a “ballast variant” in v. 10b, as a further explanation is given of how the nobles of the nations have gathered (cf. Kraus 1988:470; Prinsloo 1996:396, 397).

Verse 10c is parallel to v. 10d. Verse 10cd is a synthetic parallelism (Schaper 1994:263). In v. 10c the shields of the earth (the nations or their leaders) belong to God, in other words are gathered as his and that is why he is exalted in v. 10d.

Verse 2 is parallel to v. 7. Both deal with God who must be praised. Note the use of imperative forms in both verses. The preposition לָ is used in a similar manner in both indicating who should be praised. The imperative forms in vv. 2 and 7 are followed by the particle יִ in the following verses, which indicates the reason why the imperatives to praise occur (cf. Prinsloo 1996:395; Schaper 1994:263; van der Ploeg 1973:291; van Uchelen 1977:51).

Verse 3 is parallel to v. 8. In v. 3 Yahweh Almighty is depicted as King over all the earth and praiseworthy due to his fearsomeness. In v. 8 God is depicted as king of all the earth and it is said that he must be praised with insight. The word pair לָּאָרִיִּים לָּאָרִים occurs in both vv. 3 and 8. Verse 3 also corresponds to v. 8 as both are introduced by יִ and explain why God is praiseworthy. They are also nominal sentences followed by verbal sentences (cf. Craigie 1983:347; Hossfeld & Zenger 1993:289; Prinsloo 1996:395; Schaper 1994:263; van der Ploeg 1973:293; van Uchelen 1977:51).

Verse 4 is parallel to v. 9. In v. 4 Yahweh is depicted as subjugating the nations to
Israel and in v. 9 God is depicted as ruling over Israel as well as gentile peoples or the nations, probably implying that the nations are part of Israel (cf. Du Preez 1997:317; Zucker 2007:168).

Verse 5 is parallel to v. 10ab. In v. 5 it is stated that God chooses Israel’s inheritance for them, namely the land of Canaan. This alludes to the covenant promise that was made with Jacob/Israel, namely the promise of a land and many descendants. In v. 10ab the nobles of the nations are stated to be gathered with the nation of the God of Abraham. In v. 10ab the covenant promise is thus extended to include the nations.

Verse 6 is parallel to v. 10cd. In v. 6 mention is made of God ascending with a shout and with the sound of a ram’s horn. Shouting and the use of a ram’s horn is military terminology. In v. 10cd mention is made of the shields of the earth (also military terminology) belonging to God. Yet again there is a reference to God being exalted, implying he is/was praised. Also note the use of בְּגֹדֶל in v. 6 and אֲלֹהִים in v. 10c to refer to God (cf. Terrien 2003:377; van der Ploeg 1973:291).

(2) Chiasms
In v. 5 there is an example of chiasmus formed between the reference to God choosing Israel’s inheritance and the glory of Jacob, which is the land of Canaan and Israel’s inheritance. Both are indicated as being loved by God.

\begin{align*}
\text{הָעִבְדָּהָלָמָנָה} & \quad \text{(5) He chooses for us our inheritance.} \\
\text{b} & \quad \text{a} \\
\text{אֲלֹהִים יָדַעְתָּנָה נְפָשְׁתָּנָה} & \quad \text{the glory of Jacob, whom he loved. Selah.} \\
\text{a} & \quad \text{b}
\end{align*}

Between vv. 7 and 8 there is a chiasmus as a result of the exhortation to praise, followed by the reference to God as king that must be praised (v. 7) and then a reference to God as king of all the earth and again an exhortation to praise (v. 8) (cf. Bratcher & Reyburn 1991:439).

\begin{align*}
\text{כֹּלָּהָלָמָנָה} & \quad \text{(7) You must praise God, you must praise.} \\
\text{b} & \quad \text{a} \\
\text{אֲלֹהִיםָם לְמַעֲשָׂה יָמָּה לְמַעֲשָׂה יָמָּה} & \quad \text{You must praise our king, you must praise.} \\
\text{a} & \quad \text{b} \\
\text{כֹּלָּהָלָמָנָה} & \quad \text{(8) For the king of all the earth is God,} \\
\text{b} & \quad \text{a} \\
\text{כֹּלָּהָלָמָנָה} & \quad \text{you must praise with insight.} \\
\text{a} & \quad \text{b}
\end{align*}

In v. 9 there is a chiasmus formed between the ruler God and God sitting on his throne ruling (cf. Prinsloo 1996:396; Van Uchelen 1977:51).
Verse 10ab and v. 10c also form a chiasmus. In v. 10ab there is reference made to the nobles of the nations being assembled with God’s nation. In v. 10c there is a reference made to the shields (nations) of the earth belonging to God.

(10ab) The nobles of the nations have been gathered with the nation of the God of Abraham.

(10c) For to God are the shields of the earth.

(3) Repetition

References to God are often repeated in Psalm 47 (Muilenburg 1944:252). It is clear that the notion of praising God or the call to that effect often repeats in Psalm 47 as well (vv. 2, 6, 7 and 10d) (Muilenburg 1944:253). Other themes that often repeat in this psalm are God as king (vv. 3 and 8), and God subjugating the nations and their forming part of the nation of the God of Abraham (vv. 4 and 9). Prinsloo (1996:394) points out that God is called “a great king” in v. 3, “our king” in v. 7, “king over the whole earth” in v. 8 and it is said that “God reigns over (heathen) peoples” in v. 9. The covenant promise between God and Jacob/Israel of a land as their inheritance is also alluded to and this covenant is extended to include the gentile nations as part of the nation of the God of Abraham (vv. 5 and 10a-d). The overall unity of theme in the psalm is provided by the repeated use of the following words: עם (“people”) vv. 2, 4, 10; מלך (“king”) vv. 3, 7, 8, 9; and אַרְד (“earth”) vv. 3, 8, 10. Schaper (1994:263) writes that the Leitwörter in Psalm 47 are בֵּית, פֶּלֶת, and נַחֲש, in their different grammatical forms.

(4) Ring composition/Inclusio

Verses 2 and 6 form an inclusio. Both of these verses deal with exhortations for God to be praised. Even though there is a call to praise in v. 2, God is being praised in v. 6, indicating progression. פַּכַּלָּה רְאָה (“with a voice of joy”, v. 2) correlates with קָרָה הָאָרֶץ (“with the sound of a ram’s horn”, v. 6). The root רָאָה appears in v. 2 as רָאָה (“You

Verses 7 and 10cd form an inclusio. Both these verses also deal with exhortations for God to be praised. Note that even though there is a call to praise in v. 2, God has been exalted in v. 10d, indicating progression (cf. Dahood 1966:287; Muilenburg 1944:252).

Verse 2 and 10cd form an inclusio, at the beginning and at the end of Psalm 47. Both these verses deal with exhortations for God to be praised. Note that v. 2 deals with a call to praise and that v. 10d states that God has been greatly exalted, indicating progression throughout Psalm 47. Also note the use of יָשָׁה in v. 2 to refer to the nations and the use of מִרְדֵּךְ in v. 10 to refer to the shields of the earth, who are in essence the nations or their representatives (Craigie 1979:284). The expression לאלהים (“to God”) appears in v. 2 and it is implied that the nations are “to God” in v. 10 (cf. Du Preez 1997:311; Prinsloo 1996:397, 398; Van der Ploeg 1973:294; Van Uchelen 1977:49, 51).

(5) Symplece

Note that the word זֶרֶת (“you must praise”) appears at the beginning and end of vv. 7a, b and 8a. As noted above, these verses also form a chiasmus. These two verses therefore form a coherent structure and a unit of thought.

(6) Stichwort/keyword

The word זֶרֶת (“you must praise”) is an example of a stichwort or keyword. This is another reason why vv. 7 and 8 form a compositional unit.

(7) Word pairs

The word pair מִרְדֵּךְ/לָעֲלָמּות occurs in vv. 3b and 8a. As noted previously, these two verses also form a parallelism.

Semantics

(1) Metaphor

In vv. 3b, 8a and 9a God is depicted as a king ruling over all the earth. In vv. 4 and 5a it can even be said that God as king also functions as a divine conqueror and acts as protector of his peoples’ interests. He can therefore be viewed as an ancient Near Eastern divine warrior. In v. 5 the metaphor of “the glory of Jacob” is used to refer to the inheritance which Israel shall receive, namely the land Canaan. In v. 10ab the fact
that the nations have been gathered with the nation of the God of Abraham functions as a metaphor to indicate that the nations are part of the nation of God (Israel). In v. 10c the reference to shields functions as a metaphor for the nobles or rulers (perhaps warriors or legions) of the nations convening before God as his people.

(2) Deletion
An example of deletion occurs in v. 4b. Verse 4a is parallel to 4b. It is implied that the action mentioned in v. 4a (יָבְדָי: “to subjugate”) is also applicable to v. 4b. Verse 4b can thus be understood to mean “and he (also) subjugates people under our feet”.

Another example of deletion occurs in v. 5 regarding the action or verb רָפַץ (“he chooses”).

The last example of deletion in Psalm 47 is in v. 6. The verb הָלַךְ (“to go up”) is omitted in v. 6b.

(3) Enjambment
There are three examples of enjambment in Psalm 47, namely in vv. 4, 5 and 10ab.

(4) Antonomasia
Instead of referring to the land of Canaan in v. 5, one of the main characteristics of Canaan, being the glory of Jacob, is used to refer to the land which Israel inherits instead.

(5) Pars pro toto
In v. 3b and 8a there is reference made to God being king over all the earth. This can be interpreted as his being king over the entire universe (including the heavens and Sheol). Thus, a part of the whole, the kingship of God over the earth, is used to explain or represent the whole, namely the kingship of God over the cosmos.
SYNTACTICAL ANALYSIS

Table 2: Syntactical analysis of Psalm 47

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Verse</th>
<th>Syntax of the Hebrew text</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Classification</th>
<th>Type of sentence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>לְכָּל־נַפְשֵׁיָהּ לָכֵּי־אֲדֻמֵּי</td>
<td>1i</td>
<td>Introduction / Heading</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>דַּלְתֵּי־לְשׁוֹנָם לָכֶל</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>I</td>
<td>[Command]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>לָכֶל לָכֶל</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>I</td>
<td>[Command]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>כִּי־דַלְתֵּי־לְשׁוֹנָם נָךְ</td>
<td>3 a</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>(Reason)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>לָכֶל לָכֶל</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>I</td>
<td>(Reason)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>לִבְּכָל־לָכֶל</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>I</td>
<td>[Statement]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>לָכֶל לָכֶל</td>
<td>4 a</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>[Statement]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>כִּי־דַלְתֵּי־לְשׁוֹנָם נָךְ</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>I</td>
<td>[Statement]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>אֶת־אֱלֹהִים אֱלֹהִים</td>
<td>5 a</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>(Relative)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>לָכֶל לָכֶל</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>I</td>
<td>[Statement]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>נָךְ נָךְ</td>
<td>6 a</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>[Statement (elliptic)]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>יָמָה־אֱלֹהִים</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>I</td>
<td>[Command]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>יָמָה־אֱלֹהִים</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>I</td>
<td>[Command]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>יָמָה־אֱלֹהִים</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>I</td>
<td>[Command]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>בְּמוֹרֵב</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>I</td>
<td>[Command]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>כִּי־דַלְתֵּי־לְשׁוֹנָם נָךְ</td>
<td>11 a</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>[(Reason)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>בְּמוֹרֵב</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>I</td>
<td>Command]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>מִלְאָלֹהֵי־עֲלָיָהָם</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>I</td>
<td>[Statement]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>בְּמוֹרֵב</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>I</td>
<td>[Statement]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>נְעָרֵי־עֲלָיָהָם</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>I</td>
<td>[Statement]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>בְּמוֹרֵב</td>
<td>14 a</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>(Prepositional)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>נְעָרֵי־עֲלָיָהָם</td>
<td>15 a</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>[(Reason)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>נָךְ נָךְ</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>I</td>
<td>Statement]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A typical characteristic of a hymn is the abundant use of imperatives that indicate exhortations to praise in 2nd or 3rd person masculine plural or 1st person plural

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8 [ ] indicates an Independent linguistic sentence (I) or a Colon; { } indicates a Context Dependent (CD) or semi-independent linguistic sentence or a Sub-colon; ( ) indicates a Dependent linguistic sentence (D) or a Comma.
cohortative subjects, the use of יִקְּו clauses, relative clauses or participles (Haglund 1984:10; Hossfeld & Zenger 1993:289).  

According to Anderson (1972:32-33), the formal structure of hymns is often made up of three parts, namely: (1) Hymns are composed of an invocation or exhortation to praise, which is addressed to various groups or peoples, such as the call to the nations by Israel to praise God in vv. 2, 7, 8b and 10d in Psalm 47. (2) A statement or explanation of the summons to praise may follow with the content of praise, a description of why God should be praised, or by defining the people addressed to praise. In Psalm 47 God is praiseworthy because he is fearsome (v. 3) and is king over all the earth (vv. 3 and 8). He also subjugates the nations under Israel, implying he is a mighty conqueror or warrior (v. 4) and he also chooses Israel’s inheritance, implying that he has their best interest at heart (v. 5). Verse 9 depicts God as not only ruling over Israel, but also over the nations. (3) The main section of the hymn gives the grounds for the introductory exhortation. The call to praise and the basis for the praise is connected or joined with the conjunction יִקְּו (“for”). Anderson (1972:362) writes that יִקְּו “is the customary hymnic particle introducing the main section of the Psalm”. The conclusion of the hymn often echoes the introductory formula. See for example vv. 3, 8 and 10cd of Psalm 47. The particle יִקְּו of v. 3 should also be implied in vv. 4 and 5, which, together with v. 3a, give reasons for the exhortation to praise in v. 2 (Prinsloo 1996:391).

Muilenburg (1944:245) has studied many examples of such lines introduced by יִקְּו and concludes that “the burden and the stress of the poem seems frequently to be placed after it”. He also states in a footnote that the meaning of יִקְּו is not always causal.

It is also important to note that there are hymns that form exceptions to this pattern and that they tend to be hymns with specialised topics, for example hymns about Zion as God’s city (Psalms 46, 48, 84, 87) and the kingship of God (for example Psalms 93

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9 Anderson (1972:360) writes that Psalm 47 is a double hymn, with two introductions (vv. 1 and 6) and two main sections (vv. 2-5 and 7-10). Kraus (1988:466) classifies Psalm 47 as an “imperative hymn”, Mowinckel (1962:3) as a New Year hymn and Schaper (1994:263) classifies it as an “imperativischen Hymnus”.

10 Kraus (1988:467) and Westermann (1981:147) are of the opinion that the particle יִקְּו introduces the reasons God is praiseworthy. Note that vv. 3, 8, 10c and 10d deal with God’s kingship and reasons he should be praised. Every time the second foot of the verse (3b, 8b and 10d) deals with a statement made about the qualities or kingship of God and in the first foot of the verse (3a, 8a and 10c) a reason is given for that statement – it introduces the substance of praise (Craige 1983:347; Prinsloo 1996:390).
and 99) (Mays 1989:26-27). Anderson (1972:33) in turn writes that we may distinguish between two types of hymns or praises of God, namely psalms which praise God as king or which celebrate his kingship (Psalms 47, 93, 96-99) and the songs of Zion (Psalms 48, 76, 84, 87, 122, possibly 46 and 132).

**STICHOMETRIC AND STRUCTURAL ANALYSIS**
It is clear from the stichometric analysis of Psalm 47 that it can be divided into the following segments:

- **Lines:** Apart from the heading, Psalm 47 consists of ten lines, each divided into two feet.
- **Strophes:** The psalm can be grouped into six strophes.
- **Stanzas:** These strophes are again divided into two stanzas, both with a parallel structure.

The heading of Psalm 47 is irrelevant for the syntactical and stichometric analysis as it is likely a later addition to the text and is therefore not taken into account (Schaper 1994:263).

From the above it is clear that each of the two stanzas is made up of two quatrains and one distich (Terrien 2003).

This psalm is often divided into two stanzas or sections, namely vv. 2-6 and 7-10, primarily because Psalm 47 is considered to have a parallel structure. Other criteria such as the formal aspects of the Hebrew text (such as parallelism, chiasmus and inclusio), as well as content, are used to divide this psalm into two stanzas (Buttenwieser 1938:349-350; Craigie 1983:347;11 Gunkel 1986:202; Hossfeld & Zenger 1993:290-291; Kraus 1966:350-354, 1988:466, 469; Mays 1994:186; Muilenburg 1944:246; Prinsloo 1996:389; Terrien 2003:376, 377; van der Ploeg 1973:287, 291; van Uchelen 1977:48-49).

Schaper (1994:263, 265) proposed an alternative structure as he identified a development in Psalm 47 from the first stanza (vv. 2-5) which is laden with imperfect forms, to the second stanza (vv. 7-10) which in turn has numerous perfect forms. Verse 6 forms a bridge (Gelenkstück) between the two strophes. Another alternative has also been proposed, again a two-strophe structure, namely vv. 2-5 and 6-10, by the likes of Anderson (1981:360), Du Preez (1997:312), Ridderbos (1958:49-50; 53) and Sabinga (1988:474). Anderson (1972:360) and Mays (1994:186) distinguish between two summons or introductions (vv. 1 and 6) and two descriptions or main sections (vv. 2-5 and vv. 7-10). Du Preez (1997:310) divides Psalm 47 into “two more or less synonymous parallel parts,” namely vv. 1-5 and vv. 6-10.

Each of these stanzas has a summons to praise (vv. 1 and 6), followed by reasons for praising God. Verses 2 and 7-8 deal with God as being King of all the earth.

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11 Craigie (1983:347) also distinguishes four strophes, namely vv. 2, 3-6, 7 and 8-10.
Verses 3-4 and 9 deal with God’s favoured people and in vv. 5 and 10 he is depicted as the exalted Lord. Sabinga (1988:476) writes that the titles of God are distributed in a perfectly regular way in the second part of the Psalm according to a symmetrical pattern (vv. 6-10). There are even those exegetes who distinguish between three or more strophes (cf. Bratcher & Reyburn 1991:436; Briggs & Briggs 1969:398-400; Delitzsch 1893:96-97; Prinsloo 1996:389, 400-401, and Sabourin 1969:217-218).

Sabinga (1988:474) and Kraus (1988:468) view the Selah in v. 5 as a mark indicating a major division in the psalm. Exegetes have not come to a consensus on the meaning of Selah and it is therefore important to rather focus on the formal aspects of the text than paying heed to the position of a word of which the function and meaning are still largely unclear (Anderson 1972:43; Gillingham 1994:250). So the possibility that Selah indicates a break in the structure is hereby discredited. Sabinga (1988:474) writes that the first three words of v. 6a (גֵּלֶל אֶלְּהָה בַּהֲרוֹן) occupy the centre of the psalm and he employs complex equations to illustrate this. Although this is an interesting approach to determining a structure for Psalm 47 it does not take enough of the stylistic, formal and thematic content of the Psalm into account.

A special case that deserves attention for its similarity to the structure proposed in this study is the study of Muilenburg (1944:244) who writes that Psalm 47 has two strophes of equal length, namely of five lines or ten stichoi. He notes that the phrases גֵּלֶל אֶלְּהָה בַּהֲרוֹן (“the glory of Jacob”) and אֶלְּהָה אֲבָרֶם (“the God of Abraham”) occupy

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12 Kraus (1988:468) writes that vv. 3-5 are “universally historical” whereas v. 6 is “cultically oriented”.

13 Two ancient traditions of interpreting Selah are that of the Septuagint (LXX) which uses diapsalma, which (according to some) indicates an interlude, and the ancient Jewish traditions, which interprets it as meaning “for ever” or “always, everlasting”. Recent interpretations proposed for Selah are that it derives from the root (to lift up), indicating that worshippers should lift up their voices and sing louder or that the term might be derived from the Aramaic “to turn, bend, pray”, indicating a point at which the worshippers should fall prostrate and pay homage in submission to God (Anderson 1972:49). Most of the occurrences of Selah in the Psalter occur in the first three books. According to Anderson (1972:48-49) this could be an indication of when certain psalms originated, as the first three books of the Psalter are the older collections of the psalms. He also notes that what is less certain is whether the usage of the word Selah is as old as the collections in which they occur.

14 The total number of words in Psalm 47, including the heading in v. 1, is 77 words. The last word of v. 5, Selah, is number 37. After the first three words of v. 6a another 37 words follow. This can be illustrated with the equation 37 + 3 + 37 = 77 words (Sabinga 1988:474-475).
more or less the same position in both strophes. It is clear that vv. 5 and 10 are parallel to each other. Muilenburg also emphasises the place of the יְהוָה line, similarly following the opening exhortation of each strophe. I agree with him since vv. 3 and 8 are also parallel with regard to the use of the particle יְהוָה and their content. Muilenburg (1944:247-248) suspects that the strophe was originally meant to end at the end of v. 5 were the Selah occurs. He is also of the opinion that the lines following on v. 6 are a new hymn. What is certain is that the section following on v. 6 is definitely parallel to the first stanza, but if this is enough ground to state that it is a separate hymn is not so certain and not supported by the text as it is. The יְהוָה in v. 6 is related to יְהוָה in v. 3, which also happens to form an inclusio between these verses. Muilenburg is also of the opinion that it is the Temple choirs which are exhorted to strike up their music in v. 7. This is improbable, seeing that there can only be distinguished between three persons or groups when analyzing the morphology of Psalm 47, and it is the nations who are exhorted to praise in v. 2, which in turn is parallel to v. 7.

Another problematic aspect of this psalm is that the last four feet form one verse (v. 10). Is it possible to view one verse as a strophe or for one verse to be part of two strophes, such as Psalm 47:10ab and 10cd appear to be? If only the content is taken into account when doing a structural analysis of Psalm 47, the structure of the Psalm would form two parallel sections and it would then be inevitable that v. 10 should be viewed as part of two strophes.

It is clear then that the problem exegetes face when determining the structure of Psalm 47 is whether the break between the two stanzas should be made at v. 6 or v. 7.

From the following it will be clear that I propose that Psalm 47 has two parallel stanzas, consisting of three strophes each, six strophes in total. The following are formal aspects of all six strophes to indicate how they form units:

**Stanza I (vv. 2-6): Exhortations by Israel to the nations to praise God and reasons why**

**Strophe A (vv. 2-3): God must be praised, for he is the almighty king**

This strophe forms a unit as the reason for the exhortation in v. 2 is given in v. 3 by

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15 According to Zucker (2007:167-170) Psalm 47 has structured parallelistic configurations that are “emblematic” and “stair-like”: v. 2 is parallel to v. 6; v. 3 is parallel to vv. 7-8; v. 4 is parallel to v. 9; v. 5 is parallel to v. 10. This interpretational structure, however, is not proposed for Psalm 47 as it does not take the repetition of key themes and poetic techniques into account.
means of the particle י. There are also parallelisms in v. 2 and in v. 3. A relation also exists between יִהְיֶה יִרְאָה (v. 2) and יִהְיֶה יָרָא (v. 3), which emphasises the Psalm’s universal theme (Prinsloo 1996:390). Also note the parallel use of יָרָא and יָרָא in v. 3 and the alliteration formed by them (Prinsloo 1996:391; Roberts 2002:267; van Uchelen 1977:48).

Stophe B (vv. 4-5): God subjugates the nations under Israel in keeping with his covenant promise to them

This strophe forms a unit due to the occurrence of internal rhyme (homoioteleuton) in v. 4 and v. 5a. The occurrence of the syllable –nu (נ) of the 1st person plural suffix indicates that there is a relationship between these verses – both refer to “us” (Israel). Both of these verses also begin with imperfect 3rd person masculine singular verbs (יהוה in v. 4 and מאר in v. 5) (Prinsloo 1996:391). Examples of enjambment also occur in v. 4 and in v. 5. In v. 5 there is an example of deletion, regarding the verb “to choose”. Prinsloo (1996:391) also notes that another reason why these verses are connected is because of the use of ellipsis in both, as well as the repetition of the preposition י (in v. 4 and לי in v. 5). In each verse God is the subject of the verb – both these verses deal with the actions of God for his people (Prinsloo 1996:391). Prinsloo (1996:391) is of the opinion that the particle י of v. 3 should be presupposed in vv. 4 and 5 as well. Verses 3-5 then function as motivations why God should be praised, namely due to God’s salvific acts and his punishments.

Strophe C (v. 6): God ascends while being exalted

In v. 6 there is an example of deletion (again we have the occurrence of ellipsis); the verb “to ascend” is omitted in v. 6b. There is also an example of parallelism – יָשָׁר in v. 6a and יַעֲדוּ in v. 6b are parallel to each other (Duhm 1899:133). There is no consensus among exegetes whether v. 6 ends the first stanza or begins the second stanza. But the content of v. 6 is clearly of such nature that it forms a bridge between stanzas one and two (Prinsloo 1996:393). In v. 6 God is the subject of the verb יַעֲדוּ, which correlates to the preceding three vv. where he is also the

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16 The phrase יָשָׁר יָרָא is used again in v. 8. Prinsloo (1996:390) points out that the first part of v. 8 is very similar to the second part of v. 3. Both these verse lines function as reasons for the exhortations to praise God – he is the universal king (Prinsloo 1996:390-391).

17 The particle י is further used twice in v. 9. It corresponds to the use of יָשָׁר in v. 3, יָרָא (v. 6) and יָרָא (v. 10). The repetition of the particle י and the verb root יָשָׁר emphasises the theme of Yahweh as universal King (Prinsloo 1996:391).
subject. Stylistically it also shares characteristics with vv. 4 and 5. Therefore, v. 6 can be viewed as the last strophe of stanza one.

Stanza II (vv. 7-10): God rules over the whole earth (reason for the exhortations in Stanza I)

Strophe D (vv. 7-8): God must be praised, for he is King
Verse 8 begins with the particle יָני, which connects v. 7 and 8\(^{18}\) (Prinsloo 1996:395; van Uchelen 1977:49). In v. 7 the word יָאָשֶׁר appears four times, twice in every foot, and once in v. 8b, forming a sympleco at the beginning and end of every foot of v. 7. This indicates that vv. 7 and 8 form a unit. The word יָאָשֶׁר is also an example of a Stichwort in strophe D. There is a parallelism in v. 7 and between v. 7b and v. 8a. Also note the chiasmus between v. 7 and 8. Craigie (1983:349) writes that the second “verse” or strophe of the hymn also begins with a call to praise, as is the case in v. 2, while Kraus (1988:469) writes that v. 7 forms a new hymnic introduction. However, v. 7 is not specific in describing who is being addressed to praise God. Kraus reckons that they probably include the nations as well as Israel, instead of only the nations as in v. 2, implying that the psalm is broadened in respect to those called to worship.

Strophe E (vv. 9-10ab): God extends his covenant to rule over all the nations
Note the repetition of the sound –im (ה), the chiasmus and the parallelism in v. 9. There is also an example of enjambment in v. 10ab and of parallelism, as well as chiasmus, between v. 10ab and 10cd. Prinsloo (1996:395) writes that v. 9 is a continuation of the reason given in v. 8 why God is praiseworthy. Therefore, יָהָי is implied at the beginning of v. 9. Although the subject of v. 10a is not God, its contents still corresponds to the preceding in that it focuses on the kingship of God and on its influence on the nations. The שִׂמְחַת of v. 9 is now more narrowly defined as the נִצָּת and נִיצָת in v. 10 (Prinsloo 1996:396; Schaper 1994:263; Van Uchelen 1977:49).

Strophe F (v. 10cd): God rules over all the nations, therefore, he has been exalted
God has been exalted, because the shields of earth belong to him. It has already been stated that יָהָי introduces the reason for the statement that follows in the next foot. Also important for the structure of Psalm 47 is the inclusio formed between vv. 2 and 6 (at

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\(^{18}\) In this regard verse 3 corresponds to verse 8, as both are introduced by יָהָי, explaining why God is praiseworthy, and they are both nominal sentences. Both these sentences are also followed by verbal sentences. The keyword נִיצָת occurs in both these verses (Prinsloo 1996:395).
the beginning and end of stanza I, which indicates progression), vv. 7 and 10cd (at the beginning and end of stanza II, which indicates progression), and the inclusio formed between vv. 2 and 10d (at the beginning of stanza I and the end of stanza II, which indicates the ultimate progression from exhortation by Israel to the nations to praise God, and until it is stated that he has been greatly exalted).

The themes that are dealt with in the two stanzas and six strophes can be illustrated as parallel as follows:

**Table 4: Parallel themes in Psalm 47**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stanza</th>
<th>Strophe</th>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Stanza</th>
<th>Strophe</th>
<th>Theme</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>יִהְוָה must be praised! (Verse 2)</td>
<td>II</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>יִהְוָה must be praised! (Verse 7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>יִהְוָה is King (Verse 3)</td>
<td></td>
<td>E</td>
<td>יִהְוָה rules over Israel and the nations (Verse 9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B</td>
<td>יִהְוָה subjugates the nations for Israel (Verse 4)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>The covenant is extended to include the nations (Verse 10 ab)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Allusion to the covenant promise with Israel is made (Verse 5)</td>
<td></td>
<td>F</td>
<td>יִהְוָה has been exalted (Verse 10cd)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>C</td>
<td>יִהְוָה / יִהְוָה has been exalted (Verse 6)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**CONCLUSION**

The problematic structure of the psalm, on which there is no consensus, makes interpretation of some key themes in the psalm difficult. The main concern of this study was to analyse Psalm 47 to determine a working structure to aid the interpreter in his or her interpretation of the text. Such a structure can then in turn form the framework for the socio-historical interpretation of the text. The objective of this study was to determine a structure based on an analysis that takes as its point of departure the poetic techniques found within the psalm, followed by a syntactical, stichometric, and structural analysis of the poem.

It has been indicated that Psalm 47 has a coherent structure and unity of thought which enables it to be studied as a coherent unit. It has fixed structural elements such as parallelism, chiasmus and inclusio. There is clearly well-roundedness in the psalm,
starting with exhortations to praise God (vv. 2 and 7) and ending with the statements that he has been exalted (vv. 6 and 10). The events in the psalm appear to follow chronologically upon, if not parallel to, each other. Psalm 47 also forms two parallel parts with the same themes repeating themselves. A summary of the poetic techniques that are employed in Psalm 47 on the levels of sounds, patterns and semantics has also indicated the coherent structure of the poem, especially through the use of parallelisms, chiasmus and ring composition or inclusio.

**BIBLIOGRAPHY**


