

Hebrew Whiteboard

Biblical Hebrew and the Psalms

Psalm 104

Objectives

- 1. Identify verse structure by means of major disjunctive accents.**
- 2. Display verse structure by means of logical line diagramming.**
- 3. Interpret verse structure.**
- 4. Identify grammatical elements and poetic devices.**
- 5. Interpret poetic device function(s).**
- 6. Identify the psalm's structure.**

Psalm 104:1

Identify major disjunctive accents and divide into poetic lines.

topical *rebia'*

'*oleh-veyored* = primary disjunctive accent in this verse

tipchah = secondary disjunctive

'*atnach* = secondary disjunctive in this verse

silluq = end of v. 1

1 בְּרַכִּי נַפְשִׁי אֶת־יְהוָה

יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי

גִּדְלָתָּ מַאֲד

הוֹד וְהַדָּר לְבָשֶׁת:

Psalm 104:1

Adjust to display
grammatical and
parallel relationships.

Piel imperat. fs + vocative
of address (noun + 1cs
pron. suff.) + dir. obj.

1 בְּרַכֵּי נִפְשֵׁי אֶת־יְהוָה

Vocative of address + Qal perf.
2ms, characteristic present.

יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי גִבּוֹרִים

Adverb of intensity.

מְאֹד

Compound adverbial
accusative, manner.

הוֹד וְהַדָּר

Qal perf. 2ms, characteristic present.

לְבַשְׂתָּ:

Psalm 104:2

Identify major disjunctive accents and divide into poetic lines.

tipchah = secondary disjunctive

עֲזָה-אֹר 2

'atnach = primary disjunctive in this verse

כִּשְׁלֵמָה

rebia' mugrash = secondary disjunctive

נוֹטָה אֲשֶׁמִּים

silluq = end of v. 2

כִּירִיעָה:

Psalm 104:2

Adjust to display
grammatical and
parallel relationships.

Qal act. ptcp. ms, characteristic.

עֲטָהּ - 2

Adverbial accusative, instrument.

אֹר

Adverbial prep. phrase, comparison.

כַּשֵּׁלְמָה

Qal act. ptcp. ms, characteristic
+ dir. obj.

נוֹטָה לְשָׁמַיִם

Adverbial prep. phrase, comparison.

כַּיְרִיעָה:

Psalm 104:3

Identify major disjunctive accents and divide into poetic lines.

rebia' = secondary disjunctive

3 הַמְקָרָה בַּמַּיִם

'oleh-veyored = primary disjunctive in this verse

עַל־אֹתָיו

'athnach = secondary disjunctive in this verse

הַשָּׁם-עָבִים רְכוּבוֹ

rebia' mugrash = secondary disjunctive

הַמְהֵלֵךְ

silluq = end of v. 3

עַל-כַּנְפֵי-רוּחַ:

Psalm 104:3

Adjust to display
grammatical and
parallel relationships.

Piel ptcp. ms w/art.

הַמְקַרָּה 3

Adverbial prep. phrase, location.

בַּמַּיִם

Adverbial accusative,
specification.

עַל־אֹתָיו

Qal act. ptcp. ms
w/art. + dir. obj. +
adverb. accus.,
specification.

הַשָּׁמַיִם-עֲבָיִם רְכוּבוֹ

Piel ptcp. ms w/art.

הַמְהַלֵּךְ

עַל-כַּנְפֵי-רוּחַ:

Adverbial prep. phrase, location.

Psalm 104:4

Identify major disjunctive accents and divide into poetic lines.

4 עֲשֵׂה מִלְּאֲכָיו רוּחֹת

'atnach = primary disjunctive in this verse

rebia' mugrash = secondary disjunctive

silluq = end of v. 4

מִשָּׁרְתָיו

אֵשׁ לֵהֵט:

Psalm 104:4

Adjust to display
grammatical and
parallel relationships.

Qal act. ptcp. ms +
dir. obj. w/3ms
pron. suff. + accus.
of specification.

רוּחֹת עֲשָׂה מֵאֲפָקָיו 4

Substantival Piel ptcp. mp (< נשרת)
w/3ms pron. suff.; dir. obj.

בְּנִשְׂרֹתָיו

אֵשׁ לֵהֵט:

Accus. of specification;
nouns in construct,
attributive genitive.

Psalm 104:1–4 — Translation

- 1** Bless YHWH, my soul.
O YHWH, my God, You are very great;
With majesty and splendor You are clothed—
- 2** Wrapped up *with* light as a mantle,
Stretching out the heavens like a tent curtain.
- 3** He Who builds His upper rooms on beams over
the water;
Who appoints clouds as His chariot;
Who walks upon the wings of the wind.
- 4** Making winds His messengers
And His servants flaming fire.

Psalm 104:1–4 — Translation

1 **Bless YHWH, my soul.**

O YHWH, my God, You are very great;
With majesty and splendor **You are clothed—**

2 **Wrapped up** *with* light **as a mantle,**
Stretching out the heavens **like a tent curtain.**

3 Who **built** **His upper rooms** on beams over the water;
Who **appointed** clouds as **His chariot**;
Who **walks** upon the wings of the wind—

4 **Making** **His messengers** winds
And **His servants** flaming fire.

Hymnic participles (red)

Psalm 104:1–4 — Observations

- Verse 1 repeats the inclusio marking off Ps 103:1, 22, linking the two psalms.
- “Bless” (II בָּרַךְ) = acknowledge YHWH in His position of power with all the respect due Him.
- Imperative of immediate desire basically equivalent to a future: “I will bless” (cf. J-M, §114*m, p*).
- “Soul” (נַפְשִׁי) in this context refers to the individual’s total being: mind, heart, and will = “I.”

Psalm 104:1–4 — Observations

- Vocative of address (יהוה אֱלֹהֵי) placed first, perhaps to form interior hinge with immediately preceding יהוה.
- Personal relationship expressed in אֱלֹהֵי, “my God.”
- Verb (גָּדַלְתָּ) is a static stative (expressing state of being) describing YHWH’s present characteristic state as “great.”
- Adverb מְאֹד (= “very” or “exceedingly”) modifies the preceding verb (גָּדַלְתָּ).

Psalm 104:1–4 — Observations

- Adverbial accusative nouns הוֹד וְהֶדָּר (“with majesty and splendor”) precede the verb (לְבַשְׁתָּהּ) for emphasis forming internal hinge with preceding emphatic adverb מְאֹד.
- The two nouns could be taken as a hendiadys = “majestic splendor” (cf. *HBI*, §1.8.3a).
- Verse 2 has first (עֹשֶׂה) of six hymnic participles expressing either an adjectival characteristic (as this participle) or praiseworthy divine acts.

Psalm 104:1–4 — Observations

- Adverbial accusative of means (אֹר, “with light”)—perhaps a reference to Day 1 (Gen 1:3–5).
- Adverbial prepositional phrase of comparison (כַּעֲלֵמָה, “as a mantle/garment”) modifying the participle “wrapped.”
- First of hymnic participles to be characteristic divine action (נוֹטֶה, “stretching out”)—potential correlation to concept of expanding universe.

Psalm 104:1–4 — Observations

- Adverbial prepositional phrase of comparison (כַּיִרְיָעָה, “like a tent curtain”) parallel to the previous.
- Verse 3 begins with articular hymnic participle (הַמְקַרֵּה, “Who built on beams” or “Who built with wood”), from II קרה (a verb formed from the noun קוֹרֵה, “timberwork/beam”)—past by historical reference.
- Obvious imagery or metaphor—a major element in Hebrew poetry.

Psalm 104:1–4 — Observations

- The locative prepositional phrase **בַּמַּיִם** could be translated “on/in” or “over the waters”—perhaps a reference to Day 2 (Gen 1:6–8).
- “His upper rooms” (**עֲלֵיוֹתָיו**)—perhaps a reference to God’s heavenly throne room.
- The fourth hymnic participle is articular like the first in this verse: “Who appointed” (**הַשָּׂם**)—again past by historical reference.

Psalm 104:1–4 — Observations

- “Clouds as His chariot” (עָבִים רְכוּבוֹ) consists of a double accusative: second accusative of the produced thing following the direct object accusative (cf. J-M, §125w)—more poetic imagery.
- The fifth hymnic participle (הַמְהַלֵּךְ, “Who walks”) is also articular, like the other two participles in this verse.
- “Upon the wings of the wind” (עַל-כַּנְפֵי-רוּחַ) uses yet another metaphor for imagery.

Psalm 104:1–4 — Observations

- Verse 4 (like v. 2) starts with עֲשֶׂה (“making”), the final of the six hymnic participles in vv. 2–4.
- Double accusative (מִלְאָכָיו רוּחֹת) presents the accusative of the produced thing (the second accusative).
 - “Making His messengers winds” may refer to their speed of movement.
 - Construction does not mean “making winds His messengers”—contra Leupold, 732.

Psalm 104:1–4 — Observations

- **Second half of verse continues with another double accusative: מְשַׂרְתִּיו אֵשׁ לֵהֵט.**
 - “Making His servants flaming fire” may also refer to their speed of movement (synonymous parallelism) or their devotion and intensity in serving.
 - Construction does not mean “making flaming fire His servants.”
 - Both parallel constructions add to the description of God’s royal splendor.

Psalm 104:5

Identify major disjunctive accents and divide into poetic lines.

יִסַּד-אֲרֶץ 5

tipchah = secondary disjunctive

עַל-מְכוּנֶיהָ

'atnach = primary disjunctive
in this verse

rebia' mugrash = secondary
disjunctive

בַּל-תִּמּוּט

עוֹלָם וָעֶד:

silluq = end of v. 5

Psalm 104:5

Adjust to display
grammatical and
parallel relationships.

Qal perf. 3ms + noun fs (direct object).

5 יִסַּד-אָרֶץ

Adverbial prepositional phrase,
location; noun mpl + 3fs pron. suff.

עַל-מְכוּנֶיהָ

Negative (modal) + Niphal imperf.
3fs (< מוֹט).

בִּלְתַּמּוֹט

Adverbial temporal phrase.

עוֹלָם וָעֶד:

Psalm 104:6

Identify major disjunctive accents and divide into poetic lines.

tipchah = secondary disjunctive

6 תְּהוֹם

'atnach = primary disjunctive in this verse

כִּלְבוֹשׁ כְּסִיתוֹ

rebia' mugrash = secondary disjunctive

עַל-הָרִים

silluq = end of v. 6

יַעֲמְדוּ-מֵיָם:

Psalm 104:6

Adjust to display
grammatical and
parallel relationships.

Adverbial accusative, instrument;
emphatic word order.

תְּהוֹם

6

Adverbial prepositional phrase,
manner/comparison.

כְּלִבְיֹשׁ

Piel perf. 2ms (< כסה) + 3ms pron. suff.

כִּסִּיתוּ

Adverbial prepositional phrase,
location; emphatic.

עַל-הַיָּרְדֵּן

Qal imperf. 3mp (עמד) + subject.

יַעֲמְדוּ-מִיָּם:

Psalm 104:7

Identify major disjunctive accents and divide into poetic lines.

'atnach = primary disjunctive in this verse

מִן־גַּעַרְתָּהּ יְבוֹסִין 7

rebia' mugrash = secondary disjunctive

מִן־קוֹל רַעַמָּה

יִתְפַּזֵּן:

silluq = end of v. 7

Psalm 104:7

Adjust to display
grammatical and
parallel relationships.

Adverbial prepositional phrase,
instrument; emphatic.

מִן־גְּעֵרָתָהּ 7

Qal imperf. 3mp (< נוֹס) with paragogic *nun*.

יִנוּסֶנּוּן

Adverbial prepositional phrase,
instrument; emphatic.

מִן־קוֹל בְּרַעַמָּהּ

Niphal imperf. 3mp (< הִפֵּז) with
paragogic *nun*.

יִתְפִּיזֶנּוּן

Psalm 104:8

Identify major disjunctive accents and divide into poetic lines.

tipchah = secondary disjunctive

8 יַעֲלוּ הַרִים

'atnach = primary disjunctive
in this verse

יִרְדּוּ בְּקַעֲוֹת

rebia' mugrash = secondary
disjunctive

אֶל-מְקוֹם

silluq = end of v. 8

זֶהוּ יִסְדָּף לָהֶם:

Psalm 104:8

Adjust to display
grammatical and
parallel relationships.

Qal imperf. 3mp (< עלה) + subject.

Qal imperf. 3mp (< ירד) + subject.

Adverbial prepositional phrase,
location.

Adjectival relative clause:
demonstrative pronoun +
Qal perf. 2ms (< יסד).

Adverbial prepositional
phrase, dative of benefit.

8 יַעֲלוּ הַרִים

יִרְדּוּ בְּקַעֲוֹת

אֶל-מְקוֹם


זֶהוּ יִסְדָּתָּ

לָהֶם:

Psalm 104:5–8 — Translation

- 5** He established the earth upon its foundations;
It will not be moved forever and ever.
- 6** *With* the deep like a garment You covered it;
Over the mountains the waters stood.
- 7** At Your rebuke they fled;
At the sound of Your thunder they ran away.
- 8** The mountains rose; the valleys descended;
To the place which You established for them.

Psalm 104:5–8 — Translation

- 5 He **established** the earth upon its foundations;  Or, “it will be immovable”
It will not be moved forever and ever.
- 6 *With* **the deep** like a garment You covered it;
Over the mountains **the waters** stood.
- 7 **At Your rebuke** **they fled**;
At the sound of Your thunder **they ran away**.
- 8 **The mountains rose**;
the valleys descended—
To the place which You **established** for them.

Psalm 104:5–8 — Observations

- The inclusio with **סו'** sets off the second stanza of this psalm (vv. 5, 8).
- “The earth” is the focal point of v. 5 = Day 3 of creation.
- The negative clause (**בַּל-תִּמּוֹט**) can be translated as “immovable”—cf. *HALOT*, 131, 555 and *GKC*, 491 (§156g).
- The temporal clause (**עוֹלָם וָעֶד**) occurs 15x (12x in Pss + *Exod* 15:18; *Mic* 4:5; *Dan* 12:3) = “for all time.”

Psalm 104:5–8 — Observations

- By placing the adverbial accusative (תְּהוֹם) first in v. 6a, attention now focuses once again on the waters (see v. 3)—perhaps indicating introduction of a new event.
- Antecedent for 3ms pron. suffix (כְּפִיתוּ) can be אֶרֶץ, because the noun takes either fem. or masc. gender (= common).
- This same pronominal suffix prevents taking תְּהוֹם as a nominative absolute as Leupold (*Genesis*, 725, 732) does—no evidence to emend the text as Bratcher and Reyburn do (*Psalms*, 880).

Psalm 104:5–8 — Observations

- In v. 6b the emphatic adverbial prepositional phrase “above the mountains” (עַל-הָרִים) provides first indication that תְּהוֹם might be referring to Gen 7:11 rather than 1:2.
- Verse 6b, therefore, most likely refers to Gen 7:20—גָּבְרוּ הַמַּיִם וַיִּכְסּוּ הָהָרִים (“the waters prevailed and covered the mountains”).
- Note same verb root (כסה) in both Ps 104:6a and Gen 7:20.

Psalm 104:5–8 — Observations

- Verse 7 offers a stronger implication than vv. 5–6 that the text refers to the Noahic Flood by its use of “Your rebuke” (גַּעַרְתֶּךָ).
 - ✓ The strong negative and destructive concept of גַּעַר (Liedke, in *TLOT*, 322–23) militates against Creation as the reference.
 - ✓ Creation chaos theories (e.g., Kraus, *Psalms*, 300) misrepresent the biblical account, accommodating it to a pagan worldview (see Barrick, Review of Scurlock and Beal, eds., *Creation and Chaos* [Eisenbrauns, 2013], in *MSJ* 25 (2014): 129–32).

Psalm 104:5–8 — Observations

- In both halves of v. 7 the adverbial prepositional phrases take a word order position of emphasis—highlighting the instrumentality of God’s actions.
- Both verbs in v. 7 utilize the paragogic *nun* found 15x in Ps 104 (cp. Deut 56x, Isa 37x, Job 23x); see J-M, 136–37 (§44*e*).
 - ✓ In pause, usually preferred for fuller emphatic form—or, for antiquity, deliberate archaism, or meter.
 - ✓ Emphasis on fleeing in terror (see Lewis, in *TWOT*, 310), rather than simple obedience.

Psalm 104:5–8 — Observations

- Verse 8 rounds out the stanza by specifying the formation of mountains and valleys.
- Their respective locations came by divine determination and action.
 - ✓ By context this particular tectonic activity occurs at the time of the Flood, rather than on the 3rd day of creation when the land arises out of the primeval deep.
 - ✓ Verse 9 will present additional evidence.