14. The Framework to the Book of Job
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14. The Prologue and Epilogue in the Book of Job

A Survey of their Numerical Features

The prose framework to the poetical dialogues forms an indispensible constituent of the book. The prologue sets the stage for the dialogues, while the epilogue offers an evaluation of the theological quality of the dialogues and provides a happy end to the story of Job. Since the framework is formally and in terms of content totally divergent from the dialogues, it warrants a separate investigation. The present logotechnical analysis will show that it is a high grade numerical composition, in which the divine name numbers 17 and 26 are used to give prominence to crucial passages. The numbers and their multiples are self-evident.

As in several other texts (compare my analysis of Exodus 17) the names of the main characters in the story occur a significant number of times:

- The name YHWH occurs 26 times
- The name Job occurs 26 times (including 3:1)
- The designation Adversary occurs 14 times: 7x in 1:6-12 and 7x in 2:1-8.
- The numerical value of יָים, Job, 19 (1+10+6+2) is used in 1:12 and 13-22.

The designation ‘the Adversary’ (Hebrew hasṣāṭân – with the article!) should not be associated with the figure of Satan (the Devil), known particularly from New Testament texts. The Hebrew word (occurring 26 times in the OT) means ‘accuser’ or ‘adversary’, and can be used of humans (7x) and angels (19x): e.g., a human adversary in battle (1 Sam. 29:4, compare 1 Chron. 21:1, ‘an adversary’, not ‘Satan’ as in almost all translations!), or of angels: a celestial adversary (Num. 22:22, 32; Zech. 3:1-2; Job 1-2). Here it denotes a special angel (one of the so-called sons of God), whom God can send to watch people and to report his findings. For particulars, see the article “Satan” in the Anchor Bible Dictionary, V, 985-989.

The Prologue: 1:1-3:1

The unfortunate delimitation of the prologue as 1:1-2:13, to be found in BHS and in the translations, is based on the (wrong) chapter division. In the Leningrad Codex, there is no caesura between 2:13 and 3:1, which means that 3:1 (in the current, mistaken verse numbering) belongs to the prologue, which it concludes. In fact, the Codex has a large open space after 3:1, which separates it from the introductory formula in 3:2. As I shall show below, there is strong numerical evidence confirming the correct delimitation, 1:1-3:1.

As far as I can see, there is numerically nothing significant in the 88 words of the section about Job and his family (1:1-5). Neither is there anything special about the 47-word passage in which the dialogue between YHWH and the Adversary starts (1:6-8). The situation changes when the Adversary questions the disinterested character of Job’s piety:

1:9-11 The Adversary doubts Job’s piety and offers YHWH a wager 39

The 39 words divide into 9 in the introduction and the Adversary’s doubt (v. 9), followed by 17 words in v. 10 (together 26) and 13 in the challenge (v. 11).

The use of the YHWH echad formula (39 = 26 + 13) is evidently intentional to signify YHWH’s uniqueness (in addition to that of Job!). Moreover, these numbers symbolically express the idea of YHWH’s presence in the risky situation.

1:8-11 The Adversary speaks altogether 34 (2 x 17) words (4 + 17 + 13)

1:12 YHWH allows the Adversary to test Job: but he should spare his life 19

1:6-12 Total number of words in this section with 7 occurrences of hasṣāṭân 105 (15 x 7)

1:14-15 The dramatic report of the first messenger 26

1:16-17 The words spoken by the second and third messengers (15 + 19) 34 (2 x 17)

1:18-19 The final, most catastrophic, message: the death of Job’s children 34 (2 x 17)

1:6-19 Words in the passage dealing with the wager and its consequences 221 (13 x 17)

1:13-22 Words in the passage about the disasters and Job’s reaction 152 (8 x 19)

1:1-22 Total number of words: 345, with 130 (5 x 26) after atnach, and 170 in the speeches.
2:2-3 YHWH questions the Adversary about Job and defends Job (3 + 23) 26

2:1-8 The outcome of the second heavenly scene: Job is afflicted 119 (7 x 17)
The word hassâtân occurs 7 times, the ‘fullness’ of which is perfectly compensated by the sevenfold presence of YHWH!

2:9-10 Job’s wife urges him to curse God and die, but Job upbraids her Of these 31 words 5 stand in the introductions and 6 and 20 = 26 in direct speech. The number 31 happens to represent the numerical value of ־םירפ, ‘do you still’, occurring in v. 9 (16 + 4 + 11)! It is hard to say whether this was intentional.

2:11-12 Job’s three friends come to comfort him, but do not recognize him Of the 42 words divide as follows: v. 11 has 25 words and v. 12 has 17

2:13 They sit with him on the ground 7 days and 7 nights, saying nothing

2:13-3:1 Total number of words, including the 9 words in 3:1 (17 + 9) 26

2:11-3:1 Total number of words in the passage dealing with the three friends 68 (4 x 17)

The numbers 26 and 68 strongly suggest that 3:1 is integral to the latter passage.

The Epilogue and its context: 42:1-17

The numerical features of the last chapter of the book demonstrate that the prose Epilogue is fully integrated into the Dialogues. Job 42 comprises 17 verses, which is, in my opinion, not a matter of chance, but intentionally designed. They divide into 6 verses for Job’s speech (42:1-6) and 11 for the Epilogue (42:7-17). Job’s response to YHWH’s speech displays similar numerical features as in the Epilogue:

42:1-6 Total number of words in Job’s final speech, including the introduction 46 (2 x 23)
The 46 words may be coincidence, but the 41 in the speech divide as follows:

42:2 Job acknowledges YHWH’s omnipotence 8
42:3-5 Job confesses his ignorance and his newly found faith 26
42:2-5 Number of words in this part of the speech 34 (2 x 17)
42:6 Job’s conclusion: I yield, repenting on dust and ashes 7

42:7 YHWH rebukes Eliphaz and his friends: you have not spoken what is right of me, as my servant Job has The 26 words divide into 9 words before, and 17 after atnach

42:8 YHWH commands them to offer sacrifices so that Job can intercede The use of 33 words may have been intentional to anticipate YHWH’s blessing. Note the 33 words in v. 11; see 42:10-12 below.

42:9 They execute YHWH’s command and he shows favour to Job 17

42:10-17 Total number of words in the story of the restoration of Job 119
The story divides into two parts: material, vs. 10-12, and personal, vs. 13-17, precisely according to the principle of multiples of 17, as follows:

42:10-12 YHWH restores Job’s material fortunes; his relations console him 68 (4 x 17)
YHWH’s blessing (v. 11) is made up of 33 words, which represents the numerical value of ־םירפ, ‘to bless’ (2 + 20 + 11), occurring in v. 12a.

42:13-17 Job’s personal fortunes: 7 sons, 3 daughters, and another 140 years The number 140 can be explained as 2 x 70, double that of the normal lifespan of a human being, according to the rule given in Psalm 90:10.

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