Numerical Features of the Book of Malachi

A New Approach to its Compositional Structure

Please read the General Introduction

Various views on the structural design of the book of Malachi

The sections marked blue are displaced, resulting in a text contrived by the commentator in question.

1,1-2-5; 1,6-2-9; 2,10-16; 2,17-3-5; 3,6-12; 3,13-21; 3,22-24.

K. ELLIGER (Die Propheten Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephanja, Haggai, Sacharja, Maleachi, in: ATD 25, 1951, 177-206):
1,1-2-5; 1,6-2-9; 2,10-16; 2,17-3-5; 3,6-12; 3,13-21; 3,22-24.

A. 1,1-5; B. 1,6-14; C. 2,10-12; 2,13-16; D. 2,17-3-5; E. 3,6-12; F. 3,13-21; G. 3,22-24.

I. 1,1; II. 1,2-5; III. 1,6-14; 2,1-9; IV. 2,10-16; V. 2,17-3-5; VI. 3,6-12; VII. 3,13-21; VIII. 3,22-24.


1,1-2-5; | 1,6-10; 1,11-14; 2,1-9; | 2,10-16; | 2,17-3-5; | 3,6-12; | 3,13-21; | 3,22-24.

1,1; 1,2-5; 1,6-14; 2,1-9; 2,10-16; 2,17-3-5; 3,6-12; 3,13-21; 3,22-24.

1,1-5; 1,6-2,1-9; 2,10-16; 2,17-3-5; 3,6-12; 3,13-21; 3,22-24.

1,1; 1,2-5; 1,6-2,9; 2,10-16; 2,17-3-5; 3,6-12; 3,13-21; 3,22-24.

1,1-5; 1,6-2-9; 2,10-16; 2,17-3-5; 3,6-12; 3,13-21; 3,22-24.

1: 1,1-2-5; 2: 1,6-14; 3: 2,1-9; 4: 2,10-16; 5: 2,17-3-6; 6: 3,7-12; 7: 3,13-21; Conclusion: 3,22-24.


MEINHOLD (Maleachi, in: BKAT XIV/8, 2006): I: 1,1-2-5; II: 1,6-2,9; III: 2,10-16; IV: 2,17-3-5; V: 3,6-12; VI: 3,13-21; Zweii Nachworte: 3,22-23,24.

I: 1,1-2-5; 1,6-10; 1,11-14; 2,1-9; 2,10-16; II: 2,17; 3,1-2a; 3,2b-5; 3,6-7.8-9.10-12; 3,13-15; 3,16-18; 3,19-21; 3,22-24.

Overall outline based on extant layout markers, content, and numerical features

The paragraphs marked blue are individually and/or collectively highlighted by 17 and 26.

The book can be devided into 10 parts with 782 (46x17) words in Parts 1-9 and 26+68 (4x17) in Part 10, which means that Part 10 (3,19-24) stands apart as a conclusion.

Part 1: 1,1-5 YHWH loved Jacob but hated Esau: [] 5 verses 68 words (4x17).
Part 2: 1,6-14 Priests and people have brought bad offerings: [] 9 verses 171 words.
Part 3: 2,1-7 YHWH will punish the corrupt priests: [] 7 verses 102 words (6x17).
Part 4: 2,8-9 The priests have corrupted the Levi covenant: [] 2 verses 30 words.
Part 5: 2,10-12 Abominable things have been committed: P 3 verses 45 words.
Part 6: 2,13-16 Take heed, stop being faithless!: S 4 verses 72 words.
Part 7: 2,17-3-5 God’s messenger is coming; God will judge: [] 6 verses 106 words.
Part 8: 3,6-12 If people change, YHWH will bless them: S 7 verses 104 words (4x26).
Part 9: 3,13-18 The righteous are blessed, the wicked destroyed: S 6 verses 84 words.
Part 10: 3,19-24 Justice will be done on the day of YHWH: Col. 6 verses 94 words [26+68 (4x17)].

Parts 1-10 (1,1-3,24): 782 (46x17) + 94 [26+68 (4x17)] = 876 55 verses 876 words.

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Quantitative structural analysis of the book of Malachi
It cannot be excluded that some of the multiples of 17 and 26 are due to coincidence.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vs</th>
<th>Texts</th>
<th>Words</th>
<th>Letters</th>
<th>Sum words</th>
<th>S/P</th>
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<td>1,4-5 YHWH will tear down whatever Edom might build: 34 words.</td>
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<td>6x</td>
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<td>Ma 3,10</td>
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<td>Malachi 1-3</td>
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| S | 36 782 (46x17) words, which suggests that Part 10 is a distinctive literary entity. |

If people change, YHWH will bless them

3.6-7 YHWH does not change, but the sons of Jacob have turned away from him: 26 words. The paragraph is in its entirety highlighted by 104 (4x26) words. 3.11 YHWH will protect the produce of Jacob’s soil: 17 words.

The righteous blessed, the wicked destroyed

1.1-3.18 has been rounded off and sealed by its 782 (46x17) words.

Justice will be done on the day of YHWH

3.19 The evildoers will be destroyed: 26 words. 3.20-24 The righteous will be healed and YHWH will send Elijah as mediator: 68 (4x17) words. The function of this P is to draw attention to the return to the Law, and to the coming of Elijah.

Observation 1

In terms of words, the book of Malachi is in its entirety highlighted by the numbers 17 and 26, with 782 (46x17) words in Parts 1-9 (1,1-3.18) and 26 + 68 (4x17) in Part 10 (3,19-24). This is to express symbolically the 100% presence of YHWH in the prophecies of the book.

Moreover, the book begins with 68 (4x17) words in 1,1-5 and ends with 26+68 (4x17) in 3,19-24. See my article on The way a holy book begins and ends, and my analysis of Hosea, Amos, Micah, and Zephaniah.

Observation 2

At the end of the book the prophecies are authorized and sealed by the numerical signatures of Malachi and Elijah. For particulars, see my explanation at the Hebrew text of 3,19-24 below.

For Zechariah’s signature, see Observation 4 in my analysis of Zechariah. For more examples, go to pp. 17-18 in the General Introduction.

Observation 3

The book of Zechariah, with 3128 (184x17) words, and the book of Malachi, with 876 words, have altogether 4004 (154x26) words, showing that these two books have been finalized and sealed as a literary unity. And since the books of Haggai and Zechariah also constitute a literary unity in terms of content, the conclusion to be drawn is that Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi have been conceived as a coherent, larger literary entity. See Observation 4 in my analysis of Haggai.

Crucial passages highlighted by the divine name numbers 17 and 26.

1. YHWH loved Jacob and hated Esau (1,1-5): 68 (4x17) words.
2. The priests despise YHWH’s name by offering polluted food (1,6-11): 119 (7x17) words.
3. By offering despised food on YHWH’s table the priests profane him: (1,12-14): 52 (2x26) words.
4. YHWH will punish the wicked priests (2,1-7): 102 (6x17) words.
5. God shall make these priests degraded (2,9): 17 words and 68 (4x17) letters.
6. Judah has profaned the sanctuary (2,11): 17 words and 68 (4x17) letters.
7. Let none be faithless to the wife of his youth (2,15): 17 words.
8. The messenger will purify the Levites; then their offerings will please YHWH (3,3-4): 26 words.
9. If people change, YHWH will bless them (3,6-12): 104 (4x26) words.
10. On the day of YHWH the evildoers will be utterly destroyed (3,19): 26 words.
11. The righteous will be healed and YHWH will send Elijah as mediator (3,20-24): 68 (4x17) words.
The words ascribed to God in the book of Malachi

<table>
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<th>Ref. For.</th>
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<td>17</td>
<td>3,22-24</td>
<td>41/104 (4x26)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>1,2-3,24</td>
<td>624 (24x26)</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>701</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Observation 4  The 17 divine speeches (Column 3) have altogether 624 (24x26) words, precisely divided into 520 (20x26) in DS 1-14 and 104 (4x26) in DS 15-17. In Column 5, containing the words ascribed to God (WAG) including the referring formulae, only five divine utterances stand out: WAGs 2 (34 words), 4 (51 words), 5+6 (52 words), and 7 (102 words). Therefore, we may conclude with certainty that the 77 words of the referring formulae were not considered integral within the divine speeches in the book of Malachi; the same goes, as we have seen, for the books of Amos and Nahum. Whatever the case may be, the function of such formulae is to stress the divine character of the words ascribed to God.

With the books of Joel and Zephaniah, the book of Malachi shares the complete lack of introductory formulae.

I owe thanks to Klaas Eikelenboom for his constructive contribution to the delimiting of the divine speeches and for having corrected my text. Four eyes of two working independently and closely together see more than the two eyes of one.

Malachi 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Heading: 7 words</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>1,1-3</th>
<th>23+4=27</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1,4-5</td>
<td>30+4=34 (2x17)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1,6-8</td>
<td>55+7=62</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Malachi 2

1 96+6=102 (6x17)
2 אס-לא שמיה וא-לא תשמית על-לך תבר ושלום:
   אiyor יז邢台 יכאתו כים אורייא יאורייא אורייא יאורייא
   החריטים רמ אורייא יכ-אס כאו סומת על לוכ
   כל הגז או רחל פריא טור סעף
   פעמי תירס תוק עד צל
3 לחרות על תוקית אליופ על-ה驽ה דאבעה דאבעה
   בַּרֵי תוקית וא-יתני התייס (חאשבל) דאבעה דאבעה
   דאבעה דאבעה
4 שימי יאני לח
5 החרית פיתת את-התיס (חאשבל) דאבעה דאבעה
   פ السيد החרית פיתת (חאשבל) דאבעה דאבעה
6 יכ-אס כאו סומת על-לוכ
    כל הגז או רחל פריא טור סעף
7 יכ-אס כאו סומת על-לוכ
8 יכ-אס כאו סומת על-לוכ
9 יכ-אס כאו סומת על-לוכ
10 יכ-אס כאו סומת על-לוכ
11 יכ-אס כאו סומת על-לוכ
12 יכ-אס כאו סומת על-לוכ

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Malachi 3

10 3.1-3a 47+3=50

1 The Book of Malachi

11 2,16 11+7=18

12 3.6-8 35+3=38

13 3.9-12 57+9=66

14 3.13-15 34(2x17)+2=36

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Excluding the 6 words of the two referring formulae, there remain 47 words, which represent the numerical value of Malachi, functioning as his signature:

This gains credibility in light of the fact that Elijah’s signature is to be found in the 28 words of 3,23-24.

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{15} & \quad 3.17 \quad 16+3=19 \\
\text{16} & \quad 3.19-21 \quad 47+6=53
\end{align*}
\]