

## 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 indispensable 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 'ywb, Job, **19** (1+10+6+2) is used in 1:12 and 13-22.

The designation 'the Adversary' (Hebrew *hassâtân* – 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	<b>39</b>
	The <b>39</b> words divide into <b>9</b> in the introduction and the Adversary's doubt (v. 9), followed by <b>17</b> words in v. 10 (together <b>26</b> ) and <b>13</b> in the challenge (v. 11). The use of the YHWH <i>echad</i> formula ( <b>39 = 26 + 13</b> ) 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 <b>34</b> (2 x <b>17</b> ) words (4 + <b>17</b> + <b>13</b> )	
1:12	YHWH allows the Adversary to test Job: but he should spare his life	<b>19</b>
1:6-12	Total number of words in this section with <b>7</b> occurrences of <i>hassâtân</i>	<b>105</b> (15 x <b>7</b> )
1:14-15	The dramatic report of the first messenger	<b>26</b>
1:16-17	The words spoken by the second and third messengers (15 + 19)	<b>34</b> (2 x <b>17</b> )
1:18-19	The final, most catastrophic, message: the death of Job's children	<b>34</b> (2 x <b>17</b> )
1:6-19	Words in the passage dealing with the wager and its consequences	<b>221</b> ( <b>13x17</b> )
1:13-22	Words in the passage about the disasters and Job's reaction	<b>152</b> (8 x <b>19</b> )
1:1-22	Total number of words: 345, with <b>130</b> (5x <b>26</b> ) after <i>atnach</i> , and <b>170</b> 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 **31**  
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  $\text{עָרַבְתָּ}$ , '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 **42 (6 x 7)**  
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 **17**
- 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 **26**  
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 **33**  
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  $\text{בָּרַךְ}$ , 'to bless' (2 + 20 + 11), occurring in v. 12a.
- 42:13-17 Job's *personal* fortunes: **7** sons, **3** daughters, and another **140** years **51 (3 x 17)**  
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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