

## 9. Daniel's Song of Praise in Daniel 2— Logotechnical Analysis

### Guidelines

- Please read the [General Introduction](#) and the Introduction to the [Embedded Poetry](#).
- For common features found in the numerical analysis chart, see the "[Key to the charts](#)".

### Daniel 2:20-23 in its Literary Context

- The Song of Daniel in 2:20b-23 is Daniel's response to the vision in which God revealed to him the secret of the king's dream. Therefore, his song of thanksgiving is perfectly in line with the flow of thought in the narrative. This is strongly buttressed by the numerical evidence, as I shall demonstrate below. Its role in the story is to stress the fact that it is God who gives Daniel his wisdom and governs human history. Consequently, being part and parcel of the narrative, the Song should not be regarded as a secondary insertion, and may not appear on the list of 'inset hymns'.<sup>1</sup>

It is interesting to find that the numerical features we encounter in the Hebrew texts of the Old Testament appear also in the Aramaic part (2:4-7:28) of the Book of Daniel. At first sight, judged by the results of the logotechnical analysis of the first three chapters, the book of Daniel cannot be rubricated as a meticulously designed numerical composition. However, certain passages in the story clearly exhibit the fingerprints of a deliberate use of the divine name numbers **17** and **26** to highlight crucial events in the story and to symbolically signify God's presence in the events described. Here is the word-count:

#### Significant numerical features of Daniel 1-3

1:8-9	God favours Daniel's request to be excused	<b>26</b>
1:8-10	Daniel's request and the eunuch's reply	<b>55 = 32a + 23b</b> <sup>2</sup>
1:11-12	Daniel's request to be submitted to a test	<b>26</b>
1:12-14	Daniel and his friends submitted to the test	<b>34 (2 x 17)</b>
1:16-17	The food issue resolved, God gives them wisdom	<b>26</b>
2:1-2	Nebuchadnezzar troubled by dreams	<b>26</b>
2:1-13	The king's dream and its interpretation	<b>204 (12 x 17)</b>
<b>2:4-49</b>	<b>The story of Daniel's wisdom</b>	<b>806 (31 x 26)</b>
2:5-6	The decision of the king regarding his dream	<b>32 = 17 + 15</b>
2:9	The king threatens the four Israelite men	<b>26</b>
2:14-19	Daniel approaches Arioch with a request	<b>85 (5 x 17)</b>
2:16-19	Daniel begs the king to be allowed more time	<b>52 (2 x 26)</b>
<b>2:20-23</b>	<b>Daniel's Song (to be analysed in detail)</b>	
2:27-30	Daniel tells the king the secret has been revealed	<b>78 (3 x 26)</b>
2:27	No wise man can tell the king the secret	<b>17</b>
2:29	God who reveals secrets has made it known	<b>17</b>
2:36-39	Daniel's interpretation: the three first kingdoms	<b>52 (2 x 26)</b>
2:40-49	The fourth kingdom and the king's reaction	<b>208 (8 x 26)</b>
3:18	Daniel's refusal to serve the king's gods	<b>17</b>
3:29-30	Nebuchadnezzar's decree: he recognizes God	<b>34 (2 x 17)</b>
Significantly, in 4:31-34, Nebuchadnezzar's recognition of God has		<b>85 (5 x 17) words!</b> <sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> James W. Watts, "Biblical Psalms outside the Psalter", in: *The Book of Psalms: Composition and Reception*, edited by Peter W. Flint and Patrick D. Miller, Jr. (VTSuppl 99), Leiden-Boston: Brill, 2005, 288-309, explicitly mentions Daniel 2:20-23 as one of the psalms in the narrative and prophetic literature (p. 288).

<sup>2</sup> This is the well-known *double kabod formula*, expressing the glory of God; see the [General Introduction](#), p. 11.

<sup>3</sup> This survey provokes further investigation into the numerical features of the book!

## Strophic structure

- The strophic structure of the Song is evidently determined by the direction of address:
  - Strophe 1, vs. 20b-22 words spoken about God
  - Strophe 2, v. 23 words directly addressed to God.

The Song is composed of 6 verselines, 14 cola and 59 words.

## Logotechnical analysis

- Columns **a** and **b** show the number of words before and after the atnach.
- Column **c**: words in the preceding narrative; **d**: words in the song.
- To the right of the Hebrew text of the song, you'll find the numbering of the verselines.

		Total	a	b	c	d
16	וַדְּנִיאלַ עַל וּבְעֵה מִן־מַלְאָאֵ	5	5		5	
	<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">16-19 Narrative</span> דֵּי זְמַן וַיִּתֵּן־לָהּ וּפְשָׂרָא	5		5	5	
	לְתַחֲנִינָה לְמַלְאָא: פ	2		2	2	
17	אַדְיִן דְּנִיאלַ לְבֵיתָהּ אֶזְלֵ	4	4		4	
	וְלַחֲנִינָה מִישְׂאֵלֵ	2		2	2	
	וְעִזְרָיָה חֲבֵרוּהִי מִלְתָּא הוֹדַע:	4		4	4	
18	וּרְחִמִין לְמַבְעָא מִן־קְדָם אֱלֹהֵ שְׁמַיָא	6	6		6	
	עַל־רְזָה דְּנָה	3	3		3	
	דֵּי לֹא יִהְבְּרוּן דְּנִיאלַ וְחֲבֵרוּהִי	5		5	5	
	עַם־שְׂאֵר חֲפִימֵי בְּכָל:	4		4	4	
19	אַדְיִן לְדְּנִיאלַ בְּחֻזָּא דֵּי־לִילְיָא רְזָה גְלִיָּא	7	7		7	
	אַדְיִן דְּנִיאלַ בְּרַךְ לְאַלְהֵ שְׁמַיָא:	5		5	5	0
	v. 16-19	<b>52</b>	= 25	+ 27	= <b>52</b>	+ 0

## Daniel's Song of Praise and Thanksgiving

20a	Introductory formula	עֲנֵה דְּנִיאלַ וְאָמַר	3	3		3
20b	1	לְתוֹא שְׁמַיָּה דֵּי־אֱלֹהֵא מְבָרַךְ	5	5		5
	God's essential qualities	מִן־עֲלְמָא וְעַד־עֲלְמָא	4	4		4
	[1]	דֵּי חֲכֻמָּתָא וְגִבּוֹרְתָא דֵּי לֹא־הִיא:	6		6	6
	v. 20b-d		15	= 9	+ 6	= 0 + 15
21	[2]	וְהוּא מְחַשְׁנָא עַדְנִיָּא וְזִמְנִיָּא	4	4		4
	[3]	מְחַעְדָּה מְלָכִין וּמְחַקִּים מְלָכִין	4	4		4
	[4]	יְהַב חֲכֻמָּתָא לְחֲפִימִין	3		3	3
	Four middle cola (5+4+5)	וּמְנַדְעָא לְדַעֵי בִּינָה:	3		3	3
	Middle words: 59 = 23 + 13 + 23	v. 21	14	= 8	+ 6	= 0 + 14
22	[5]	הוּא גְלָא עֲמִיקְתָּא וּמְסַתְרָתָא	4	4		4
	[6]	יַדַּע מְנָה בְּחֻשׁוֹכָא	3		3	3
	[7]	וַיְהוֹרָא עֲמָה שְׂרָא:	3		3	3
	v. 22		10	= 4	+ 6	= 0 + 10
	<b>Strophe 1 v. 20b-22</b>		<b>39</b>	= 21	+ 18	= 0 + 39
23	5	לְדָן אֱלֹהֵ אֲבָתַי מְהוֹרָא וּמְשַׁבַּח אֲנָה	6	6		6

Words explicitly	דֵּי חִכְמָתָא וְנְבוּרָתָא יִתְבַּת לֵי	5	5	5
addressed to God	וְכִעַן הוֹדַעְתָּנִי דֵּי־בִעֵינָא מִן־דֵּי	6	5	5
	דֵּי־מַלְת מְלָכָא הוֹדַעְתָּנָא:	4	4	4
	<b>Strophe 2 v. 23</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>= 11 + 9</b>	<b>= 0 + 20</b>
	v. 20b-23	59	= 32 + 27	= 0 + 59
	v. 19-23	74	= 42 + 32	= 12 + 62
	v. 16-23	114	= 60 + 54	= 52 + 62

## Observations

- In terms of the 59 words of the song, the meaningful arithmetic centre is constituted by the 13 words in 21c-22b (59 = 23 + 13 + 23), with 23 words on either side (the *kabod* number: 11 + 2 + 6 + 4). The arithmetic centre on word level falls within the two middle verselines (6 = 2+2+2) and coincides with the 4 middle cola (14 = 5+4+5), which strengthens their pivotal position:

יְהִיב חִכְמָתָא לְחַכְיָמֵי וּמְנַדְעָא לְיָדְעֵי בִּינָה  
 תּוּא גִלְא עֲמִיקְתָּא וּמְסִתְרָתָא יָדַע מְה בְּחֹשׁוֹכָא

He gives wisdom to the wise and knowledge to those who have discernment  
 He reveals deep and mysterious things he knows what lies in darkness.

The meaningful centre expresses the gist of the song: It is God who gives wisdom and knowledge. This theme reverberates in 2:28, 30, 45, and 47. See Observation 3.

- The narrative** (vs. 16-19) is made up of 52 (2 x 26) words. The divine name number 26 symbolically signifies God's presence and undergirds Daniel's conviction that God is with him in his crucial task to give the king the interpretation of the dream.
- Strophe 1** (vs. 20b-22), the hymnic section, mentions 7 qualities of God [1-7]:
  - To him belong wisdom and power
  - He changes seasons and times
  - He deposes kings and sets kings up
  - He gives wisdom to the wise, knowledge to those who have discernment**
  - He reveals deep and mysterious things
  - He knows what lies in darkness
  - Light dwells with him.

God's most important quality has been given pride of place at the centre of the menorah: It is he who gives wisdom and knowledge. This is precisely what the context requires: Daniel needs wisdom and knowledge, and only God can provide it. The menorah structure, with its unambiguous focus on the quality of God that is essential in this particular situation, clearly shows that the song was specifically composed to suit the literary context. As a matter of fact, this is in line with the message of Daniel 1-3: God governs human affairs and gives wisdom to his faithful and reveals secrets to them.

The use of exactly 39 words in Strophe 1 to list the fullness of God's distinguishing qualities clearly alludes to the Yahweh *'echad* formula (39 = 26 + 13) signifying his uniqueness and incomparability. For the use of 39 words in connection with God's essential qualities in the Book of Habakkuk (1:12-14 and 3:4-7), see my analysis of [Habakkuk 3](#).

4. **Strophe 2** is phrased as directly addressed to God, in which Daniel gives him thanks and praise for having given him wisdom and power and having revealed to him the secret of the king's dream. Both sections of the song therefore attest to the unity of the narrative and the Song, so that it is out of the question that we have to do with an inset hymn.
5. The name YHWH does not appear in the prayer. In fact, in the Book of Daniel it occurs only in Chapter 9 (vs. 4, 8, 14a and 14b). God is called אֱלֹהֵי שָׁמַיָא, 'the God of heaven' (v. 18a and 19b), אֱלֹהֵי, 'God' (determined, v. 20a), and אֱלֹהֵי, 'God' (not determined, v. 23a).

© 2007

Dr. C.J. Labuschagne	Senior Lecturer in Semitic Languages (retired),
Brinkhorst 44	University of Pretoria, South Africa
9751 AT Haren (Gron)	and
The Netherlands	Professor of Old Testament (retired),
<a href="mailto:labuschagne.cj@planet.nl">labuschagne.cj@planet.nl</a>	University of Groningen, The Netherlands