

Hidden Signatures in the Hebrew Bible

The present article deals with my discovery of the spectacular use of the numerical value of a person's name, particularly that of the main character in a writing, as a device to denote his numerical signature. This phenomenon has only recently been detected and needs further investigation, because there are probably many more than the instances I have noticed so far. In any case, though some of the cases may be a matter of coincidence, there is every reason to assume that we have to do with an accepted scribal technique in biblical times. Needless to say, the knowledge of this device is highly esoteric.

As a matter of fact, I have noticed this phenomenon years ago in Psalm 3, the very first Davidic psalm, but it was only later that I realized that the frequent occurrence of the number **14** in the psalm was intended by the author to denote David's numerical signature.

What meets the eye immediately in the logotechnical analysis of [Psalm 3](#) is the prolific use of **14** to give structure to the text. **14** is the numerical value of the name of דָּוִד: $4+6+4=14$. Its structure is:

Strophe 1 (vs. 2-3)	14 words	Strophe 1 is demarcated by selah
Strophe 2 (vs. 4-5)	14 words	Strophe 2 is demarcated by selah
Strophes 3-4 (vs. 6-8)	28 (2x14) words.	

Since Psalm 3 is the first Davidic Psalm in the Psalter, the author has obviously chosen this number to structure the psalm and to imbue it with David's signature. Note, however, that this does certainly not imply that every number **14** occurring in the book of Psalms refers to David!

Let us now turn to the New Testament, **Matthew 1:1-17**, with the heading "The Genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of *David*, the son of *Abraham*". The passage contains a list of **42=3x14** 'achieved' generations and **41** real generations from Abraham to Jesus to illustrate the idea that Jesus is the son of *Abraham* and the son of *David*. The number **14** represents the signature of David, דָּוִד, and **41** that of Abraham by means of the numerical value of his name in Hebrew, אַבְרָהָם: $1+2+20+5+13=41$.

What follows is a number of significant examples, but there are undoubtedly more:

Deuteronomy 1:1-5: The time and place of Moses' discourse (preceding the introductory formula לְאֶמֶר): **78=2x39** words, the numerical value of the name מֹשֶׁה: $13+21+5=39$.

Joshua 23:15-16: The stern warning against idolatry at the end of Joshua's farewell address: **58** words, which represent the numerical value of his name, יְהוֹשֻׁעַ: $10+5+6+21+16=58$.

1 Samuel 1-28: the signature of Samuel figures no less than 8x: שְׁמוּאֵל = $21+13+6+1+12=53$:

- 1:1-3, **53** words at the beginning of the passage where the main characters are introduced;
- 1:9-11, **53** words at the beginning of the passage where Hannah prays and makes a vow;
- 2:19-21, **53** words at the end of the passage dealing with little Samuel's cloak;
- 3:8-10, **53** words at the end of the passage where Samuel says: "Speak, for your servant hears!"
- 7:2-17, **265** (5x53) words in the passage dealing with Samuel as judge and intercessor;
- 9:15-20, **106** (2x53) words in the passage where YHWH informs Samuel about his intentions;
- 12:22-25, **53** words at the end of Samuel's famous speech;
- 28:12-14, **53** words in the passage about the appearance of the ghostly form, identified as Samuel.

1 Samuel 17:1-54: David as the Philistine champion: the passage has altogether **854** words, 61×14 , the numerical value of the name of David, דָּוִד: $4+6+4=14$.

1 Samuel 27:1-28:2: David as raider in the service of Achish: the passage has altogether **252** words, 18×14 , the numerical value of the name of David, דָּוִד: $4+6+4=14$.

2 Samuel 12:1-3: The beginning of the passage dealing with Nathan's meeting with David has **50** words, which is the numerical value of the name Nathan, נָתָן: $14+22+14=50$.

2 Samuel 13:11-14: The passage in which Tamar tries to ward off the rape has **55** words, which is the numerical value of the name of Tamar, תָּמָר: $22+13+20=55$.

2 Samuel 13:20-22: The passage dealing with the aftermath of the rape has also **55** words.

1 Kings 1:32-34: David orders Solomon's anointment and to hail him: **51** words, which represent the numerical value of the name Solomon, שלמה: $21+12+13+5=51$.

1 Kings 4:1-5:1: The passage deals with Solomon's high officials and is authorized at the beginning (4:1-6) by his signature of **51** words as well as at the end (4:18-5:1).

1 Kings 17:5-7: The passage dealing with Elijah's stay by the brook Cherit has **34** words, which may be interpreted as signifying Elijah's signature, אליהו: $1+12+10+5+6=34$. The same goes for

1 Kings 1:36-37: Elijah's prayer preceding the coming of YHWH's fire from heaven: **34** words.

Isaiah 9:13-17: The passage dealing with YHWH's warning that he will 'cut off head and tail' (14), has **68** words, which represent Isaiah's numerical signature: ישעיהו = $10+21+16+10+5+6=68$. In v. 15 the true prophets are called the head, as opposed to the false prophets as the tail. The latter will be cut off, while the true prophets (*represented by Isaiah!*) will remain.

The book of Joel is a special case. It begins with **29** words (1,1-3). This number appears no less than four times in the book. It reappears in threefold in the **87** (3×29) words of 2,12-17, in fivefold in the **145** (5×29) words of 2,18-27, and to crown it all, in the total number of words: **957** (33×29). Note that 33 is the number of instances of the name YHWH! All this is not surprising, for **29** represents Joel's numerical signature: $10+6+1+12=29 =$ יואל, 'YHWH is God!'. At the same time it underlines the monotheistic confession expressed in his name. But there is more - see [Joel](#).

The book of Habakkuk is made up of **54** verses in the prophecies, excluding the headings (1,1 and 3,1). The number **54** signifies the signature of Habakkuk by means of the numerical value of his name: $8+2+19+6+19=54=$ חבקוק. See my analysis of [Habakkuk](#).

In the book of Zechariah the call to the exiles to flee from the land of their captivity to Zion (2,10-13) constitutes the gist of the book as a whole. That this particular passage is made up of **53** words is, in my view, not coincidental but deliberate in order to create Zechariah's signature: $7+11+20+10+5=53=$ זכריה. See my analysis of [Zechariah](#).

In the book of Malachi the verse in which the name of Elijah is specifically mentioned is made up of **28** words, which is the numerical value of his name: $1+12+10+5=28=$ אליהו. See my analysis of [Malachi](#).

The book of Job (MT) has altogether a number of words, **8341** (439×19); the number **19** is the numerical value of the name Job: $1+10+6+2=19=$ איוב. Moreover, the passage in which YHWH allows the Adversary to test Job (1,12) has **19** words, and the story about the disasters and Job's reaction (1,13-22) is made up of **152** (8×19) words.

These examples must suffice to substantiate my discovery of the numerical signature of a person as a scribal device. It gains credibility in light of the fact that having a personal signature was not unknown in ancient Israel. In Job 31,35 Job says "Here is my signature (הֵן־תָּוִי)!". The word תָּוִי is derived from the last letter in the Hebrew alphabet and means 'mark' or 'signature'.

See *Hebrew & Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*, s.v.

For the earliest signature, go to <http://www.historyofinformation.com/expanded.php?id=2614>.

© 2015 Senior Lecturer in Semitic Languages (retired),
 Dr. C.J. Labuschagne University of Pretoria, South Africa
 Brinkhorst 44 and
 9751 AT Haren (Gron) Professor of Old Testament (retired),
 The Netherlands University of Groningen, The Netherlands

labuschagne.cj@gmail.com