

General Introduction to Logotechnical Analysis

See also the article – co-written by John Burnett and myself - on BIBAL.net. Click [here](#).

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Logotechnique: counting words and verses in the Bible

Logotechnique, or quantitative structural analysis, is a systematic formal investigation of the architecture of biblical texts. Being in fact *numerological criticism*, this activity should not be regarded as a new discipline but as a supplementary branch of literary criticism, of which the first and foremost task is to explore and describe the architecture of a given text.¹

It is based upon the hypothesis that the biblical writings are numerically structured— that is, that their composers arranged verses, pericopes, sections, books, and perhaps even the entire Bible according to patterns defined by number, much as poetry is defined by quantities of syllables, metric feet, verses, stanzas, and so forth.

The hypothesis is motivated primarily by three facts:

- The Masoretes and subsequent copiers of the text of the Hebrew Bible, who were responsible for handing down the text, carefully counted verses, words, and even letters of the biblical books and painstakingly located and registered their arithmetic centres. It is usually held that the purpose of this meticulous counting was to ensure that the text was transmitted correctly,² but it may have had the more specific purpose of preserving intricate and delicate numerical structures which can be observed by counting letters, words, verses, etc.
- The letters of the Hebrew alphabet, and hence any word written in them, have numerical values. Computing such values according to one or another of several methods, — a procedure known as *gematria*— is well attested in the biblical period.
- Counting and writing were always understood to be closely related in the Hebrew tradition— indeed, the Hebrew word *sepher* can mean either a 'count' or a 'book'. In fact, we ourselves might speak in the same way of an 'account' which a storyteller 'recounts'.

The hypothesis that the biblical writings are numerical compositions is beginning to become hard fact in light of the results of a substantial number of inquiries carried out in recent times, showing convincingly that counting was part and parcel of the art of writing in biblical antiquity. This means that it was not Masoretic scholarship that added counting at some late

¹ See my article “De literairkritische methode” in: A.S. van der Woude (ed.), *Inleiding tot de studie van het Oude Testament* (Kampen, 1986; 2nd edition 1993), pp. 102-127.

² However, note the criticisms of this view advanced by F.I. Andersen & A.D. Forbes (“What *Did* the Scribes Count?” in D.N. Freedman, A.D. Forbes, and F.I. Andersen, *Studies in Hebrew and Aramaic Orthography*. Eisenbrauns, Winona Lake, Indiana (1992), pp. 297-318): “A moment’s reflection indicates that the reported counting activities of the scribes were quite likely to be flawed, as the evidence of the texts themselves confirms. No two manuscripts are orthographically identical; hence, the tally of letters differs from manuscript to manuscript. Nor is there available reliable knowledge of the true counts by which to test the accuracy of any copy. And without precision, there is no (scientific) point to the claims made.” (p. 299). Furthermore, word- and letter-counts are not given for all the books of the Bible. And again, the middle letter or word nominated (sometimes differently, in different manuscripts) by the Masoretes for each book is often substantially inaccurate— the tradition likely arose from a “hierarchical” definition of “middle”— the middle letter or word of the middle verse or line of the middle *sefer* of the middle book, etc. For instance, it is to be noted that the Masoretic tradition correctly names Psalm 78:36 as the middle verse of the Psalter, while the rabbinic tradition (bKid 30a) has Psalm 78:34 as the middle. Such data perhaps suggest a concern not so much with accuracy as with structure, in some sense and for some purpose not yet entirely clear.

stage in the transmission of the biblical text. The authors of these texts themselves did the first counting. To them writing was composing, and composing involved counting.

We should realize that in antiquity the use of numbers was taken for granted in the composition of texts and was accepted as a normal compositional technique to organize a text. In biblical times an author employed numerical devices to discipline his writing and to keep him from writing off the cuff.

We should also appreciate that numerical principles offer an author the opportunity to imbue his text with a symbolic significance and to give it an extra dimension. The structuring numbers speak a language of their own and tell their story in their own way. By virtue of the symbolism of the numbers, the texts contain a latent message hidden in the text, which can only be unlocked by the reader who is familiar with such techniques or who knows how to look for these devices and find them.

The biblical authors must have had an aesthetic aim as well: to compose works of art, literary architecture complying with their idea of perfect form and their sense of beauty. In my numerical research I came across many psalms deserving the label "compositional gem" - Psalm 19 is such a gem, in which it is said of the Torah of YHWH that it is *temimah*, "perfect" (verse 7), a term that primarily regards the contents of the Torah but undoubtedly refers to the perfect literary form of the text as well. For the biblical authors it was not a matter of literary beauty for the sake of beauty, but a matter of beauty in the service of the contents. Form and contents belong inextricably together. In order to create such works of art, the texts were composed, irrespective of their size, according to premeditated designs suitable for the purpose and appropriate to their contents.

Claus Schedl coined the term "logotechnique" to describe the art of numerical composition, which he derived from the Greek term *logotechnia* meaning "literature," more particularly a skillfully designed literary work of art conforming to certain laws governing its form. So "logotechnique," denotes in fact "word-art," "language-art," "compositional art."³

Though some evident logotechnical features of a text may be easily detected, especially in smaller texts, they do not readily meet the eye, since they are hidden in the inmost structure of the text. The average reader cannot detect them, unless the count verses, words and other items and look for the center of a text, knowing how to do this. However, I am not sure whether the biblical writers intended the numerical features of their texts to be understood and appreciated by the average reader. They knew that the artfully designed compositions could only be comprehended and prized by readers familiar with the compositional techniques, by insiders. As a matter of fact, it concerns the high technology of professional scribes, esoteric knowledge accessible to the initiated only.

It is by no means a matter of coincidence that the Hebrew word for "writing," "document" and "book," *sepher*, and the word for "scribe," *sopher*, which also means "enumerator" and "secretary," derive from one and the same verb: *sipper*, meaning both "to count," "to number" and "to recount."

The "scribes" were certainly men of learning. I Chronicles 2:55 mentions families of *sopherim*, "scribes" and II Chronicles 34:13 knows *sopherim* as Levites. They formed a professional class of craftsmen (see I Chronicles 27:32; Jeremiah 36:26,32 and Psalm 45:1). A man of such learning and professional skill was the priest and scribe Ezra, qualified as "a scribe versed in questions concerning the commandments and the statutes of YHWH" (Ezra 7:11). The biblical scribes like Ezra were the predecessors of the *Sopherim*, "the Scribes," the Pharisaic teachers of the Torah and guardians of the canonical text of the Bible, counting its verses, words and letters in order to preserve its numerical features.

We can imagine that the biblical scribes took pride in their numerical compositions. They did so in the same way as the architects and craftsmen responsible for the medieval cathedrals

³ See Claus Schedl, *Baupläne des Wortes: Einführung in die biblische Logotechnik* (Vienna, 1974), p. 22.

were proud of what they had achieved. However, such works of art were not intended primarily to satisfy the aesthetic desires and the pride of the craftsmen; they were constructed essentially to the glory of God. The scribes believed that the hidden features of the text, the holy numbers giving it its artful structure, which did not meet the eye of the average reader, were visible to God to whom their work was dedicated after all.

This sheds unexpected new light on one of the most enigmatic texts in the book of Deuteronomy, 29:28 in the Hebrew text (29:29 in English translations):

The *hidden things* belong to YHWH our God; the *things revealed* belong to us and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of this law.

The full connotation of the “hidden things” and the “things revealed” is not clear. The primary message of this verse is that in adverse and incomprehensible situations *in life*, that are understood only by God, the people of Israel should leave those situations to God and just keep to his commandments, which have nothing secret, enigmatic or incomprehensible about them. However, the author may also have intended to convey an additional message for those who have ears to hear. The “hidden things” *in the Torah*, the esoteric aspects of the text, are there for God’s benefit to honor him; but the “things revealed,” the plain and manifest features of the Torah, are there for our benefit and for that of our descendants so that we may observe them. In other words, the message is also: do not spend too much time and energy trying to discover the hidden secrets of the text, but apply yourselves to observing the prescriptions of the Torah.

By organizing verses, pericopes, sections, and books, in terms of numerically defined structures, the original authorial activity of the scribes launched the typically Jewish literary counting tradition. Their successors, the Masoretes, merely continued the tradition. Accordingly, biblical scholars simply cannot brush this tradition aside as irrelevant. On the contrary, we are obliged to commit ourselves to studying the numerical features of the texts we inherited.

For the massive evidence for the structural role of numbers in the Biblical text, see my commentary on the book of Deuteronomy (published in Dutch): *Deuteronomium*, Vol. I-III (*De Prediking van het Oude Testament*), Nijkerk/Baarn: Uitgeverij G.F. Callenbach 1987-1997, and Duane L. Christensen’s investigations into the form of the text of Deuteronomy in Vols. 6a-6b of the *Word Biblical Commentary* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2001-2002).

For the rediscovery of the paramount importance of numbers as a compositional device used to structure Old and New Testament texts, the reader is referred to Casper J. Labuschagne, *Numerical Secrets of the Bible*, BIBAL Press, [D. & F. Scott Publishing](http://www.dandfscott.com), North Richlands Hills, TX 1999 [ongoing reprints, ISBN 0-941037-67-3]. For the electronic version, which is freely downloadable, click on: <http://www.labuschagne.nl/z%26oz/book.htm>.

The publication of my book gave rise to three internet activities:

- 1) the website of [Rüdiger Heinzerling](http://www.ruedigerheinzerling.com), who was the first to review my book (in English): he also opened a discussion on the numerical features of the biblical writings (with an introduction to Quantitative Structure Analysis and relevant literature),
- 2) the website of The Berkeley Institute of Biblical Archaeology and Literature ([BIBAL](http://www.bibal.org)), initiated by Duane Christensen, on which a major word-count program has been launched, including that of the Psalms,
- 3) my own website.

The name YHWH woven into the fabric of the text

There is a Jewish tradition— recorded for the first time, as far as we know, in the thirteenth century in France— that the name of God was woven into the very texture of Scripture. This does not mean that the tradition about this ‘interweaving’ was invented at that time. For its origin, we must look beyond the medieval kabbalistic tradition to biblical antiquity. Claus Schedl was convinced that this tradition goes back to the time of the composition of the writings constituting the Hebrew Bible.

Moreover, he suggested that this interweaving of God's name into the text was carried out by means of the two numbers **26** and **17**, which represent the gematric values of the divine name. The first number represents the name YHWH, or *yahweh*, an archaised form of the 3rd person form *yihyeh*, "he is". The second number, in my opinion, represents the designation '*ahweh*', the archaised 1st person form '*ehyeh*', "I am":

- **26** = y h w h = 10 + 5 + 6 + 5
- **17** = ' h w h = 1 + 5 + 6 + 5.

The number **17** can be explained as the sum of the *digits* of the numbers 10 + 5 + 6 + 5 (1 + 0 + 5 + 6 + 5). However, perhaps more preferably, **17** is the numerical value of a conjectured word '*ahweh*', which is *to 'ehyeh*, "I am" (cf. Exodus 3:14), as *yahweh** is to *yihyeh*, "he is".

The numbers **17** and **26** also both happen to be the numerical value of *kabod* (*kbd*) or *kabôd* (*kbwd*), 'glory'. Among the Jewish methods of computing gematric values, two are common:

- in one, by which we get the *positional value*, because the letters have the value of their position in the alphabet, the letters *aleph* through *yodh* represent 1 through 10, but *kaph* = 11, *lamedh* = 12, *mem* = 13, and so forth;
and
- in another, by which we get the *decimal value*, the letters *aleph* through *yodh* again represent 1 through 10, but *kaph* = 20, *lamedh* = 30, *mem* = 40, etc.

Accordingly, as regards *kabod* (*kbd*) also spelled as *kabôd* (*kbwd*):

- **k b d** positional value 11 + 2 + 4 = **17** **kbwd** 11 + 2 + 6 + 4 = **23**
- **k b d** decimal value 20 + 2 + 4 = **26** **kbwd** 20 + 2 + 6 + 4 = **32**.

The fact that **17** and **26** can stand for both the Name and the Glory is not surprising, since in the Bible the 'name' and the 'glory' of God were inextricably linked. This is most effectively demonstrated in Exodus 33:17-23, where Moses asks God to show him his *glory*, and God responds by pronouncing his *name* in Moses' hearing. Both represent God's presence. Moreover, 'name' (or the Name itself) and 'glory' are often mentioned together in the Hebrew Bible— see [Numerical Secrets of the Bible](#), p. 88-92, and "Special patterns" below.

In my opinion, Schedl's suggestion offers the most plausible explanation ever put forward of the medieval kabbalistic tradition concerning the name of God interwoven in the Torah as in a fabric. The divine name numbers were the instruments employed by the biblical writers to interweave the holy name in the text of the Torah. In Schedl's opinion, we should consider the medieval tradition a reminiscence of a compositional technique that goes right back to biblical times. Therefore we must look beyond the medieval kabbalistic tradition for its origin. The relationship between the Name of God and the text of the Torah did not originate in medieval kabbalistic circles. It goes back to the time of the formation of Scripture itself, the time between the Babylonian Exile and the completion of the Hebrew canon and the finalization of the text of Holy Scripture in the first century of the Common Era.

Gershom Scholem refers to the kabbalistic writing *Sepher ha-Temunah*, "The book of the form," that is, the "shape," "likeness" or "representation" of the letters of the alphabet, as one of the sources for the idea of the Name of God being interwoven in the Torah. The book was written most probably in Provence not later than the beginning of the 13th century and offers an explanation of the letters of the Hebrew alphabet on a kabbalistic basis, maintaining that the Name of God was included and preserved in a mystical way in the Torah. Scholem states that the 13th century kabbalist Gikatilla was probably the first to formulate this tradition more specifically by saying that "the Name of God was interwoven in the Torah as in a fabric."⁴

⁴ For the *Sepher ha-Temunah* see Gershom Scholem, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism* (New York 1961), pp. 136-137. In his book *Ursprung und Anfänge der Kabbala* (Berlin, 1962), pp. 414-415, he writes: "Der Name Gottes ist eben auf mystische Weise überall in der Torah enthalten und, wie später zum Beispiel Gikatilla sagt, in sie eingewoben." See also his book *Zur Kabbala und ihrer Symbolik* (Frankfurt, 1973), p. 69, where he writes: "Es scheint dass Gikatilla als erster diesen Begriff des Gewebes (*'ariga*) benutzte, um zu beschreiben, wie der Name Gottes in der Textur der Tora immer

It is not easy to establish the precise connotation of the word Torah in this context. It might denote only the books of the Pentateuch, but it can certainly have a wider connotation signifying Holy Scripture, the entire Hebrew Bible, which I believe is the case in this context. This connotation is attested in both Jewish and Christian sources at the beginning of the Common Era. The results of my investigations into the numerical features of the Bible so far point definitely to a wider interpretation of the *`arigah* tradition: the Name of God was interwoven in the texture not only of the Pentateuch but of the other canonical books as well. In any case we may conclude confidently that the investigations carried out thus far have established beyond any doubt the close relationship between the Name of God and the biblical text. At the same time they underscore the kabbalistic tradition about the interweaving of the Name in the texture of Scripture and set it in a new light.

The logotechnical analysis charts will enable readers to discover for themselves how, and to what extent, these numbers are to be found in the text of the psalms. Though some occurrences may be due to coincidence, others appear to be consciously designed. For particulars, consult the logotechnical analyses of the individual psalms.

For the status of the *kabod* numbers **23** and **32**, derived from the spelling *kbwd*, see below under "Special patterns".

For the intriguing way in which the name YHWH itself has been woven into the fabric of the text, see the Introduction to Book I, especially Table I, and the Observations there, as well as the first Table in each case in the Introductions to the other Books.

Criteria for logotechnical analysis

The logotechnical analysis is primarily concerned with *words* (logos-technique!) as the smallest basic building blocks of a text. Syllables or morae do not function as building blocks and cannot contribute anything to our understanding of the structure of a given text. Therefore, I consider counting them a waste of time.

Being also quantitative structural analysis in a broader sense, logotechnical analysis inevitably involves paying attention to other, larger, building blocks: the colon, verseline (not necessarily coinciding with the Masoretic verses), strophe, canticle, and canto. The purpose of counting such building blocks is to find out exactly how a text is organized on word level and other levels, and according to which principles.

The authors of the psalms had a great variety of methods at their disposal to structure their texts into certain patterns according to compositional formulae and to generate the numbers they required for the purpose of symbolism.

I have been led in my analyses by principles, which emerged in the course of my work. The criteria mentioned below, are illustrated by examples taken from Book I (Psalms 1-41), just to give the reader an impression of the variety of principles.

- **Defining the building blocks of the text:**

- The **word** is the smallest distinct meaningful element of the language, comprising inflected and variant forms; when two words are tied together by *maqfef*, they retain their distinctness and do not count as one word.
- The **colon**, called 'line' by some, is the smallest distinct group of words or clause in a poetic verseline, usually demarcated by a disjunctive marker. Together with another *colon* it constitutes a *bicolonic verseline* forming a semantic or formal parallelism. Three *cola* constitute a *tricolonic verseline*, which occur less often than the bicolonic one. In a tricolonic verseline the *atnach* is

wieder vorkommt." In the *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, volume 15 (1971), p. 1241, we read "Some said the entire Torah consists of the Name of God set in succession... or interwoven in a fabric..."

usually to be found after the second colon. Four *cola* in a Masoretic verse constitute *two bicolic verselines*.

- The **verseline** is a larger distinct unit comprising two or three *cola*. In the book of Psalms (and the book of Job), in the great majority of instances the verseline coincides with the Masoretic verse, the end of which is signified by *soph pasuq*. Sometimes, in order to achieve a desired number of verses in a group of psalms, or book of the Psalter, the Masoretes have accommodated two verselines in one verse. The first example I encountered is to be found in Ps. 5:10 and 11. In the Tables I have registered both: the poetic verselines as well as the Masoretic verses.
- The **strophe** comprises two to four coherent verselines to form a sub-division of the poem, a sub-canto or canto. The strophe is basically determined by formal factors and unity of thought.
- The **canticle**, which comprises one or more strophes, forms a sub-division of the canto or stanza.
- The **canto**, also called **stanza**, which is the largest component of a poem, orders its content and formal framework.
- **Division of the Masoretic verses into words before and after the atnach:**
 - This is the principal, currently used criterion. In the charts I indicate *atnach* by the sign ^. One of the problems I encountered is that, in Codex L, some verses lack an *atnach*. This may in some cases be due to accidental omissions, as witnessed by other editions of the text. Others, however, may be explained as deliberate in order to achieve the numerical structure the Masoretes regarded as the true, authorial arrangement of the text. Still other *atnachs* may appear to be 'misplaced', but it is safer to regard such *atnachs* as deliberately positioned for reasons we do not immediately understand. Compare, e.g., the unusual placement of *atnach* in Psalms 6, 20 and 79. For the time being, it is better to leave the text as it stands in Codex L. Therefore, I do not endeavour to restore omitted *atnachs*, nor do I ignore 'misplaced' *atnachs*.
- **Division of the text into different categories:** Examples from Book I.
 - words in *main* and *subordinate clauses*, or other syntactic structures: very commonly used in 'prose' texts, but also here: Ps. 1, 5, 6, 14, 30, 31, 33, 38.
 - words in the *framework*, and the *main body*: Ps. 8, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, and 29.
 - words in *2nd* and *3rd* person: Ps. 3, 7, 18, 25, 26, 27, 28, 32, 35, 36, and 40.
 - words of *the first person speaker*, and words *attributed to God*: Ps. 2, 12, 50.
 - words addressed to *God* and to *the adversaries*: Ps. 4.
 - words describing the *plight of the speaker*, and *what God does*: Ps. 11.
 - words of *lamentation*, and words of *supplication for help*: Ps. 13.
 - words in *1st* person singular, and plural: Ps. 17.
 - words spoken *personally*, and *impersonally*: Ps. 34.
 - words *describing gloom and doom*, and *the prayer for deliverance*: Ps. 39.
 - words spoken *publicly*, and *privately*: Ps. 41.

A new basis for textual criticism

The discovery in our time that the biblical writings are numerical compositions has far-reaching consequences for our view and treatment of the biblical text.

Speaking for myself, this insight has aroused in me a profound respect, not only for the compositional art of the biblical authors, but also for the two great codices of the Hebrew

Bible, the Leningrad Codex and the Aleppo Codex, and for the Codex Vaticanus of the New Testament. Their reliability appears to have been confirmed by the integrity of their numerical patterns, and this has led to a radical change in my attitude towards textual criticism. I have no doubt that all scholars will experience this, when they gain deeper insight into the delicate numerical structure of the biblical texts.

Such awareness is a most effective safeguard against random emendations, a practice that was rife among biblical scholars in the past century. We now have one more reason to think twice before changing the text. This does not portend the eclipse of textual criticism, but a radical change in its application.

Moreover, the ascertainment of the crucial function of the divine name numbers in the formation of the biblical writings provides an effective tool to rediscover the canonical text, that is the text that approximates the 'original', unrecoverable text.

The purpose of the current project is to amass evidence about the numerical features of the text of the Psalms in order to establish their original canonical form. This is a decisive exercise in textual criticism. Potential emendations are now also evaluated in terms of numerical structures, which go back to the authorial stage of the texts and also appear in the final editorial stage of the formation of the Psalter.

Textual emendations that are based upon solid grounds do not always affect the numerical structure of a given text in an adverse way. However, there is a great danger of seeking to emend a text *in order to* achieve desired numbers. Being deeply aware of this, I shall try never to yield to the temptation. Nevertheless, there is no need to shun emendations that are really required. Addressing a textcritical problem, one simply needs to consider all relevant issues, including the numerical aspects of the text in question. The textcritical problems I had to address, and the minor emendations I propose, are always highlighted in the text and explained in a note at the foot of the chart.

The meaningful centre of the text

Since the transmitters of the text of the Hebrew Bible located and registered the centres of books and groups of books, on the level of verses and words, and sometimes even on the level of letters— see my book [*Numerical Secrets of the Bible*](#), p. 10-11— the same procedure has to be carried out in the logotechnical analysis. This operation is not only obligatory, but also meaningful, since it brings the 'heart' of a poem to light, which in many cases contains the gist of the text, or at least a notion important to it.

It goes without saying, that, in terms of words, every poem has an arithmetic centre: one simply has to locate the middle word (in case of an uneven total number of words), or the two middle words (in case of an even number of words). That is the simplest arithmetic centre on the level of words. Such a centre is not necessarily meaningful. Therefore, taking this centre as starting point, one can proceed to determine a larger arithmetic centre on word level, in search of a meaningful centre. Such a meaningful centre is either present, or it is not.

We have to realize that not every poem necessarily has a meaningful arithmetic centre on the level of words; there may be a consciously designed meaningful centre on another level, namely in terms of the poetic structure of a text: the pivotal verseline(s), colon/cola, or strophe, of which there are numerous examples in the Book of Psalms.

In order to qualify as a meaningful centre, an apparently suitable centre has to meet strict requirements: first, it should not play havoc with the grammatical sense of the direct context, but must make sense grammatically; and second, it must express a thought or idea that can be interpreted as crucial or essential from the perspective of the author. In other words, one should always consider whether such a central phrase or sentence has been consciously intended by the author to occupy pride of place in central position in the poem. How meaningful a conceivable arithmetic centre is – either on the level of words or in terms of verselines, cola or strophes -, must be judged in each poem individually.

Special devices to highlight the meaningful centre

In order to draw attention to the meaningful arithmetic centre of a poem, the authors used a number of clever scribal devices to highlight and emphasize that centre.

- 1) In a great number of psalms it appears that they did so by means of a *sudden switch from one form of address to another*, usually from the 2nd to the 3rd person or vice versa. In other words, they positioned the arithmetic centre at the boundary of two forms of address. For examples, see Ps. 6, 7, 12, 16, 21-23, 25, 27, 28, 30, 34, 40.
- 2) Another highlighting device used was *the exceptional form of the arithmetic centre*, e.g. its relatively *shortness*, as in the case of Psalm 92 (for which see my [Numerical Secrets of the Bible](#), p. 134), or its *unique syntactical structure*, as in Psalm 58 – see Observation 2 in my Analysis of Psalm 58 - or the *centre being a refrain*, as in the case of Psalms 56 and 59 – see my Analyses of these psalms.
- 3) Another significant highlighting technique was to structure a series of occurrences of *the name YHWH* in such a way that the middle instance falls precisely within the centre of the text. See, e.g., Observation 3 in the Analysis of Psalms 11, Observation 4 in the Analyses of Psalm 12 and 13 respectively, Observation 1 in that of Psalm 30, Observation 2 in that of Psalm 40.
- 4) As in the case of the divine name, I have detected a considerable number of instances of *an important key-word* in the text being positioned exactly within the arithmetic centre, obviously in order to highlight and emphasize its significance. See e.g. Ps. 33, 35, 37, 51, 52, and 57.
- 5) A very popular technique was to let the arithmetic centre on word level coincide with the *middle colon, bicolon or entire verseline*. For a clear example - which can easily be multiplied - see my Analysis of Psalm 37, "Specific features of Psalm 37", and Observation 1, where several highlighting techniques are used simultaneously.
- 6) Some psalms, divide into *two arithmetically equal halves*: Psalms 6, 12, 20, 35, 79, 90, 91, 121, and 139. In these cases, the meaningful centre is situated either at the end of the first half, or at the beginning of the second half, as is clearly the case in the alphabetic acrostics. Psalm 92 is a special case: it has its meaningful centre in a separate verse between the two equal halves of **7** verselines and **52** words each. It is intriguing to note that in four of these psalms the two halves have *identical compositional formulae* in terms of the *atnach* (Psalms 6, 20, 79 and 121 – compare also Psalms 12 and 90!).

The alphabetic acrostics

Alphabetic acrostics in the Old Testament occur primarily in the Book of Psalms: Psalms 9-10; 25; 34; 37; 111; 112; 119; 145, but also in Proverbs 31:10-31, and in Lamentations.

On the level of words, the arithmetic centre of the alphabetic acrostics always coincides with the middle of the alphabetic sequence, i.e., in all cases it is situated either in the verseline with initial *kaph* (the 10th letter) or initial *lamedh* (the 11th letter), or in both. This means that the centre of a text in terms of words has carefully been tuned to the centre of the alphabet!

This skilful compositional technique has been used consistently in all eight alphabetic acrostics in the Book of Psalms:

- Psalms 9-10 in the verseline with initial *lamedh*
- Psalm 25 in the colon with initial *lamedh*
- Psalm 34 in the verseline with initial *lamedh*
- Psalm 37 in the verselines with initial *kaph* and *lamedh*
- Psalm 111 in the cola with initial *kaph* and *lamedh*
- Psalm 112 in the cola with initial *kaph* and *lamedh*
- Psalm 119 in the 8th (and last) verseline of the octuplet with initial *kaph*
- Psalm 145 in the verseline with initial *lamedh*.

This device has also been used in the alphabetic acrostic in Proverbs 31:10-31, in which the arithmetic centre, in terms of its 150 words, in 31:21, starts with the letter *lamedh*.

And finally, in Lamentations, the arithmetic centre of the book, in terms of its 154 verses, is theoretically between 3:33 (the 77th verse) and 3:34 (the 78th verse): $154 = 77 + 77$. The 78th verse, the real centre, starts with a *lamedh*.

I cannot withhold from the reader how ingeniously the book of Lamentations is structured in a menorah pattern by the number 22 (11 x 2) and the divine name number 17:

1.	1:1-22	22 verses	}	68 (4 x 17)
2.	2:1-22	22 verses		
3.	3:1-24	24 verses	}	18 verses (3:25-42) in the arithmetic centre
4.	3:25-33	51 words		
	3: 34	6 words		
	3:35-42	51 words	}	68 (4 x 17)
5.	3:43-66	24 verses		
6.	4:1-22	22 verses	}	68 (4 x 17)
7.	5:1-22	22 verses		

The compositional formula of the entire book, in terms of verses, is: $154 = 68 + 18 + 68$.

That of the centre, 3:25-42, in terms of words, is: $108 = 51 + 6 + 51$!

See the brief discussion in my book, [Numerical Secrets of the Bible](#), p. 14-16, and for particulars, my Analysis of [Lamentations](#).

The discovery of the centre of the text of Lamentations raises the question whether the Book of Psalms as a whole has a comparable centre. It is interesting to note that the mathematical middle in terms of the Masoretic verses of the Psalter is marked: **Psalm 78:36**. Given that **Ps. 78:35** (the adjacent verse!) is the *middle verse* of the magnificent *maskil* Psalm 78, and that this psalm is positioned at the mathematical middle of the 11 Asaphite Psalms (73-83), this may be interpreted as an indication of the central position of Psalm 78 in the Psalter. See my Analysis of [Psalm 78](#).

Special patterns

- **The menorah pattern** features 7 items symmetrically or asymmetrically arranged around a distinct centre. This pattern occurs frequently throughout the biblical writings, but one should not expect to find a menorah pattern in every psalm - see my caveat in Observation 4 in my Analysis of [Psalm 105](#). However, [Psalm 67](#) is a clear example: the famous menorah poem that has been artfully copied many times in Jewish tradition. The menorah composition *par excellence* is the impressive "Song for the Sabbath Day", Psalm 92 in Book IV. See my Analysis of [Psalm 92](#).

Its 15 verselines are structured in the following way:

Vs. 2-8	7 verselines	52 (2 x 26) words
Vs. 9 centre	1 verseline	4 words
Vs. 10-16	7 verselines	52 (2 x 26) words

Moreover, the name YHWH occurs 7 times, with the 4th instance precisely in vs. 9!

In several psalms we find series of seven items; to mention random examples:

- 7 occurrences of YHWH in Psalm 7;
- 2 sets of 7 items in Psalm 19:2-7 and 8-11;
- 7 acts of God in Psalm 23:2-5;
- 7 occurrences of 'voice' in the 7 verses of Psalm 29:3-9;
- 7 characteristics of the evildoer in Ps. 52:4-6;
- 7 items describing God's judgement and its effects in Ps. 52:7-8;

7 occurrences of the key-word Elyon in the Asaphite Psalms, with the middle occurrence in the pivotal verse of Psalm 78 (v. 35);

7 occurrences of the name of Moses in the Mosaic Book IV (90-106);

7 items, in Psalm 101:2-5, 104:2-4, 27-30, 105:39-44, 146:7-9, 147:8-11, 13-20, and 148:1-4, 7-8.

See my [Numerical Secrets of the Bible](#), pp. 31-70 and 130-135.

- **The double *kabod* pattern** consists of 55 words explicitly divided into the component parts 23 + 32, or vice versa. The term 'double *kabod* pattern' offers a better definition of the pattern in question than the term 'minor tetraktys' which I used earlier, following Claus Schedl – see my [Numerical Secrets of the Bible](#), pp. 121ff.) The mere occurrence of the number 55 in a given text is not enough to be identified as 'the double *kabod* pattern'. The two components, 23 and 32, must demonstrably constitute the pattern by their presence in the text, or in the formula $55 = 23 + 32$. Symbolically, these numbers express the glory of God. For examples in Book I, see my analyses of Psalms 13, 19, 22, and 23.

I do not consider the two *kabod* numbers **23** and **32** regular compositional numbers in the same sense as the two divine name numbers. They feature only in contexts in which God's 'glory' signifying his presence is explicitly mentioned or subtly implied. In that case, they usually feature in the double *kabod* pattern, and/or in the *kebod*-YHWH pattern – see below. However, the *kabod* numbers may also appear on their own, not necessarily in one of these patterns. Their function is to give numerical support to the contents of such texts by symbolizing God's glory. Their appearance outside these texts should be regarded as a matter of chance. Therefore, I do not mark them in bold face as a matter of course.

Unlike the two divine name numbers 17 and 26, which derive their status as compositional numbers from the fact that they are consistently woven into the fabric of the text – see below under "The name YHWH woven into the fabric of the text". This weaving and the concomitant status do not apply to the *kabod* numbers.

Treating them as regular 'compositional numbers', as Christensen persistently does, significantly increases the chances of finding a 'compositional number'. This causes a high inflation rate of 'sacred numbers', which justifies the reproach on the part of sceptics that "you can always find a sacred number".

- **The *kebod*-Yhwh pattern** consists of 58 words explicitly divided into 32 + 26, or vice versa. The number 58 in itself does not represent this pattern; as in the case of the double *kabod* pattern, the component parts, 32 and 26, must clearly demonstrate the pattern by their presence in the text. The *kebod*-YHWH pattern has the same symbolic meaning as the previous one. For four clear examples, see Psalms 8, 23, 38 and 82.
- **The Yhwh *echad* pattern** consists of 39 words explicitly divided into 26 + 13, or 30 words divided into 17 + 13. Note that the numbers 30 and 39 in themselves do not represent the YHWH-*echad* formula; they only do, if their component parts feature in the text. The same goes for the number $43 = 17 + 26$. For examples of the YHWH-*echad* pattern in Book I, see my analysis of Psalms 3, 5, 6, 8, 24, 29, 33, and 34.
- **The concatenation of divine name numbers** is an extremely useful device to weave these numbers into the fabric of the text. For examples, see Observation 3 in my Analysis of [Psalm 1](#), and particularly Observation 4 in my Analysis of [Psalm 29](#) and Observation 2 in my Analysis of [Psalm 81](#), the most impressive cases.

- **The Numerical chiasmus**, of which there are numerous instances in the book of Deuteronomy, is a numerical chiastic pattern, which seems to have the function of binding two successive sections of a text together.

The following examples illustrate the two forms of the pattern (a and b refer to the words before and after *atnach*):

First, the *semi-chiastic numerical pattern*:

Ps. 7: 2-10	76 = 49a + 27b
Ps. 7:11-18	55 = 27a + 28b
Total 7:2-18	131 = 76a + 55b

Second, the *perfect numerical chiasmus*:

2 Sam. 22:36-43	52 = 27a + 25b
2 Sam. 22:44-50	52 = 25a + 27b
Total 22:36-50	104 = 52a + 52b

- For further examples see, Psalms 2, 16, 18, 20, 21, 22, 24, 26, 29, 34, 37, 47, 50, 54, 55, 56, and 58.

The use of a coda as a device for conclusion

In his book *Rhetorical Criticism and the Poetry of the Book of Job* (Oudtestamentische Studiën, deel XXXII) Leiden - New York – Köln 1995, pp. 470-471, Pieter van der Lugt has drawn attention to what he calls a 'closing unit', e.g. at the end of chapters 5, 25-26 and 33. He also identified this significant phenomenon at the end of some psalms, primarily based on canto length, which he describes in his book *Cantos and Strophes in Biblical Hebrew Poetry, with Special Reference to the First Book of the Psalter* (OTS 53), Leiden – Boston: Brill, 2006, pp. 513-518. He distinguishes a *concluding doxology*, e.g., Ps. 7:18, 21:14, 52:11 and 59:17-18, a *summary with a doxology motif*, e.g., Ps. 80:17-20 and 26:11-12, a *summary*, e.g., Ps. 44:26-27 and 60:13-14, a *protestation of trust*, e.g., Ps. 81:16-17 and 107:43, and a *prayer for the deliverance of Israel*, e.g., Ps. 14:7.

Up till now, I have encountered the phenomenon independently here and there in the Psalter, which I recognized because of the sudden switch in the direction of address: from 2nd to 3rd person, e.g., in Ps. 13:6, 26:12 and 27:13-14; from 3rd to 2nd person, e.g. Ps. 28:9 and 33:22. At the time I interpreted it as a highlighting device focusing on what is said at the end of the poem. However, there is more to it. Having found it now in five successive psalms in Book V (Psalms 105-109; see also 135-136, 139 and 144), I think the time has come to define the phenomenon more precisely.

I suggest to call it a **coda**, which is a very useful term to describe the phenomenon.

The coda is defined in the *New Oxford Dictionary of English* primarily as a musical term:

"the *concluding passage* of a piece or movement, typically forming an addition to the basic structure; the *concluding section* of a dance, especially of a pas de deux or the finale of a ballet.."; but it is also used in connection with literature:

A concluding event, remark, or section: *his new novel is a kind of coda to his previous books*".

In *Current Literary terms: A Concise Dictionary*, by A.F. Scott, the coda is defined as:

"The *tail-piece*, occasionally added to a sonnet, giving it sixteen lines or more instead of the orthodox fourteen."

The challenge we are faced with in regards the use of a coda in the book of Psalms is to identify genuine, deliberately devised codas. Of course, every psalm has an ending, but not every ending is necessarily a coda. In my judgement at this stage of my investigations, a genuine coda must meet two requirements: first, in terms of *content*, it has to be a specific *concluding statement* or a *general conclusion* based on the main theme of the poem; and second, in terms of *form*, it has to stand apart and be distinct from the preceding body of the text. In the remaining analyses of the psalms in Book V and in the future revision of my analyses of those in Books I-IV, I shall try to identify and define individual instances of the coda in view of a deeper understanding of the phenomenon.

For the codas in Psalms 105-109, consult my preliminary remarks in the "Specific Features" and the concluding section of each logotechnical chart, as well as Observation 5 in my Analysis of [Psalm 105](#) and the relevant Observations in my analyses of the 4 other psalms. One of the problems to be resolved is to decide whether the coda structurally belongs to the concluding strophe or canto, or whether it stands completely on its own outside the body of the psalm. Each case should be decided individually, but unless there is strong evidence for the contrary, I shall consider the coda structurally integral to the last canto of the psalm, standing **apart**, but **within** the concluding canto of the psalm.

The numerical value of a key-word in the text

In the book of Deuteronomy and elsewhere in both Old and New Testament, the numerical value of a key-word in the text often defines its total number of words, or that of part of it. See [Numerical Secrets of the Bible](#), p. 135-140. This also holds true for the Book of Psalms.

In some cases one must allow for coincidence, but the following instances cannot possibly be dismissed as a matter of chance:

- **Book I:** For particulars, see the analysis of the psalm in question.
- in Psalm 1, Psalm 32, and Psalm 41: the key-word אֲשֶׁרִי, 'happy', the very first word in all three poems (numerical value: **52** = 2 x **26**): .
- Psalm 3, the first Davidic Psalm: the key-name David (**14**).
- Psalm 12: the key-word הַסִּיד, 'loyal' (**37**).
- Psalm 19: the key-word כְּבוֹד, 'glory' (positional value of the letters: **23**; their decimal value: **32**), as well as the key-word שֶׁמֶשׁ, 'sun' (**55**).
- Psalm 20: the key-word נִדְגַל, 'we set up our banners' (**33**).
- Psalm 34: the key-word יַחְדָּו, 'together' (**28**).
- Psalm 37: the key-words רְשָׁעִים, 'the wicked' (**80**) and כָּלוּ, 'they vanish' (**29**). Both occur in the central verse, and their numbers reverberate elsewhere in the poem.
- Psalm 39: the key-word הֶבֶל, 'vanity' (decimal value 5 + 2 + 30 = **37**), occurs 3 times in the text. That its decimal value defines the number of words in vs. 3-6 strongly resembles the structuring role of the number 37 in the book of Ecclesiastes.
- Psalm 40: the key-words מִבּוֹר, 'from the pit', and מִמַּיִט, 'from the mud' (numerical value of both: **41**).
- Psalm 41: the key-word אֲשֶׁרִי, 'happy' (**52**).
- **Book II:** For particulars, see the analysis of the psalm in question.
- The Zion-Psalms 48, 87, 122, 126: the key-word צִיּוֹן, 'Zion', (**48**).
- Psalm 48: the key-word יְמִינֶךָ, 'your right hand' (**58**).
- Psalm 49: the key-word יִקַּחנִי, 'he shall take me' (**61**).
- Psalm 53: the key-word הַשָּׁקִיף, 'he looks down' (**72**).
- Psalm 54: the key-word בְּאֵמֶתֶךָ, 'in your faithfulness' (**49**).
- Psalm 57: the key-word כְּבוֹדֶךָ, 'your glory' (**34**).
- Psalm 58: two key-words צְדָק, 'justice' (vs. 2) and בְּאֶרֶץ, 'on earth' (**41**).
- Psalm 59: the key-word הַצִּילֵנִי, 'deliver me' (**69**).
- Psalm 61: the key-word כַּנְּפֵיךָ, 'your wings' (**63**), and אֶחָסֶה, 'I find refuge' (**29**).
- Psalm 67: the key-word פָּנָיו, 'his face' (**47**).

- **Book III:** For particulars, see the analysis of the psalm in question.
- Psalm 76: the key-word גִּוְרָא, 'awesome' (41).
- Psalm 80: the key-words גִּפְנִי, 'vine' (34), and הַשִּׁיבֵנוּ, 'restore us!' (58).
- Psalm 81: the key-word הִתְרַנֵּנוּ, 'sing out in praise!' (69).
- Psalm 82: the key-word עֲלִיּוֹן, 'Most High' (58); compare Psalm 78 (vs. 32-39)!
- Psalm 84: the key-word מִשְׁכְּנֹתַיִךְ, 'your dwelling place' (108).
- Psalm 85: the names יַעֲקֹב, 'Jacob', and קֹרַח, 'Korah' (47).
- Psalm 86: the key-word גִּפְלֹאוֹת, 'wondrous things' (72).
- Psalm 87: the key-word מִשְׁכְּנוֹת, 'dwellings' (87); this is the 87th psalm!
- Psalm 88: the key-words מִיְדֵעַי, 'my companions', and מְהִינְשָׁךְ, 'darkness' (53).
- **Book IV:** For particulars, see the analysis of the psalm in question.
- Psalm 92: the key-word מְרֹום, 'exalted' (52).
- Psalm 93: the key-word נִבְנוֹן, 'established' (45).
- Psalm 94: the very first word אֱלֹ, 'God' (13).
- Psalm 96: the key-word כְּבוֹד, 'glory' (32).
- Psalm 99: the key-word גִּוְרָא, 'awesome' (41).
- Psalm 100: also the word אֱלֹהִים, 'God' (41); compare Psalm 99.
- **Book V:** For particulars, see the analysis of the psalm in question.
- Psalm 120: the first word of the label of all the Songs of Ascents, שִׁיר, 'Song' (51), determines the total number of words in the entire text, including the heading.
- Psalm 121: the key-root שָׁמַר, 'guard, keep' (54), determines the number of words in the psalm.
- Psalm 122: the two instances of 24 (2 x 12), in Canto I and II, symbolically refer to the 12 tribes, which are explicitly mentioned twice (in v. 4a and 4b). Moreover, the total number of words in the two cantos, 48, happens to be the numerical value of עֲדֵרוֹת, 'decree', the first word in the meaningful centre. At the same time, 24 represents the numerical value of the name David, written here in *scriptio plena* as דָּוִד (24). Elsewhere in the Psalter we find the normal spelling דָּוִד (14). Note that this is the first Davidic Song of Ascents (compare the first Davidic psalm in Book I, [Psalm 3](#)).
- Psalm 123: the key-words אֱלֹ-יְהוָה, 'to YHWH' (39), determines the total number of words in the psalm.
- Psalm 124: the key-word of Psalm 121, שָׁמַר, 'keep, guard' (54), determines the total number of words in the psalm. Psalm 124 is clearly a follow-up to Psalm 121, of which the leading theme, YHWH's guardianship, is elaborated here. The two psalms are similar in form, made up of 2 cantos, 4 strophes, and 54 words.
- Psalm 125: the very first word of the psalm, הַבֹּטְחִים, 'those who trust' (47), determines the total number of words in the psalm.
- Psalm 126: the key-word צִיּוֹן, 'Zion', in the very first colon (48), determines the total number of words in the psalm.
- Psalm 127: the key-word of Psalm 121, שָׁמַר, 'guard' (54). The 3-word meaningful centre is flanked by 54 words (27 + 27) on either side. Compare Psalm 124, with which the present psalm has close ties.

- Psalm 128: the key-word כְּנֶפֶץ, 'like a vine' (45), as it stands in Codex L, determines the total number of words in the psalm.
- Psalm 129: having exactly the same structure as Psalm 130 (2 cantos, 5 strophes, and 52 words), it anticipates that psalm of hope, Psalm 130.
- Psalm 130: the key-words קִנְיָה, 'she waits in hope', and תִּקְוָה, 'hope' (52), determines the total number of words in the psalm. The importance of the other key-word, יָחַל, 'to hope' (30), is demonstrated by the fact that the call יַחַל יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶל־יְהוָה, 'Israel, wait for YHWH in hope' (v. 7a) reverberates in the next psalm: 131:3a. It is intriguing to note that the 30 words of Psalm 131 are determined by the numerical value of the synonym יָחַל, 'to hope'.
- Psalm 131: the key-word יָחַל, 'to hope' (30), determines the total number of words in the psalm. Being a follow-up to Psalm 130, the psalm reiterates its central theme: waiting for YHWH in trust and hope. The passionate exhortation יַחַל יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶל־יְהוָה, 'Israel, wait in hope for YHWH' (Ps. 130:7a), is repeated here to conclude the psalm.
- Psalm 132: the key-word מְשִׁיחָךָ, 'your anointed' (63), determines the total number of words in the psalm. Seeing that it is a messianic psalm, this is a key-word of paramount importance. It is intriguing to note that מְשִׁיחָךָ happens to be the 63rd - and last - word of Canto I (vs. 1-10).
- Psalm 133: the key-words זֶקֶן, 'beard' (40), and אַהֲרֹן, 'Aaron' (40) determine the total number of words in the text, including the heading (40 = 19 + 2 + 19). These 2 words are positioned at the arithmetic centre of the text.
- Psalm 134: the accusative particle אֵת, (23), determines the total number of words in the psalm. The particle significantly occurs in both calls to bless Yahweh. The particle happens to contain the first and last letters of the alphabet. For the use of the Aleph-Taw device, see Observation 3 in my Analysis of [Psalm 1](#).
- Psalm 137: the twice repeated key-word עָרוּ עָרוּ, "Raze it, raze it!", in v. 7c (84) determines the total number of words in the psalm.
- Psalm 139: the key-words יָדַעַתָּ, 'you know' (52) and וַיֵּדַע, 'and know' (26), with YHWH as subject, together 78 (3 x 26) words. Both key-words occur twice: the first in vs. 2a and 4a, and the second in vs. 23a and 23b.
- Psalm 142: the key-word צָרָתִי, 'my trouble' (70), determines the total number of words in the psalm.
- Psalm 144: the important key-word אֲשִׁרֵי, 'happy', occurs twice at the end of the psalm (vs. 15a and 15b). Its numerical value (52) determines the number of words in vs. 3-9. Throughout the Psalter, this important key-word signifies the happiness of Israel as the people of YHWH. Here, the key-word precludes the very last instance of its 26 occurrences in the Psalter: in Psalm 146:5.
- Psalm 146: the key-word אֲשִׁרֵי, 'happy' (52), determines the total number of words in Cantos I- II (vs. 1-7b), both of which are made up of 26 words.

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