

6. Lament over Saul and Jonathan in 2 Samuel 1— Logotechnical Analysis

Guidelines

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

David's Lament in its Literary Context

There is no doubt at all that we have to do with a piece of inset poetry, because the narrator explicitly states that it is written in the Book of Jashar, from which he quotes David's Lament. It is impossible to tell whether he does so verbatim, as is generally supposed. Knowing how freely biblical writers handled their sources, we cannot exclude the possibility that the narrator reworked the Lament to suit his own purposes. In any case, its subject matter is particularly pertinent to the narrative context.

It is important to note that the elegy was not haphazardly inserted into the narrative, but carefully incorporated. This is demonstrated by the fact that the superscription (vs. 17-18, which is a continuation of the preceding narrative), together with the Lament (vs. 19-27) is made up of a significant number of words: **130** (5 x **26**). In light of other numerical features in the narrative, as well as in the Lament, this cannot simply be a matter of chance. To mention only the most striking features of the narrative:

- v. 4 The account of the death of Saul and Jonathan in a nutshell: **26** words
- vs. 1-10 The report with special focus on the role of the Amalekite: **156** (6x**26**) words
- vs. 1-16 David's reaction to the report: 237 words, with **119** (7x**17**) before *atnach*.
- vs. 17-18 were deliberately made up of 20 words to have **130** (5x**26**) in vs. 17-27.

Special Features of David's Lament

- The defining characteristic of the Lament is its significant **26**-word central core in the arithmetic centre, flanked by **42** (3 x **14**) words on each side: 110 = **42** + **26** + **42**.
- This conspicuously regular numerical framework on word level is reinforced by the structure of its poetic building blocks in terms of cantos, strophes, verselines, and cola.
- The compositional structure of the Lament bears a remarkable resemblance to that of the Last Words of David in 2 Samuel 23, which strongly suggests common authorship.

Strophic structure - Canto boundary: ||

Labuschagne: 19-20, v. 21 || vs. 22-23 || vs. 24-25, vs. 26-27 (3 cantos with 5 strophes, 12 verselines, 28 cola, and 110 words, with **22-23** at the arithmetic centre of the text).

Van der Lugt (private communication): 19-20, 21 || 22-24, 25-27 (2 Cantos with 4 strophes, 11 verselines, 25 cola, and 110 words, taking vs. 21 and 26 as bicola).

Logotechnical analysis

- Columns **a** and **b** show the number of words before and after the *atnach*.
- The verselines are numbered in the column to the right of the Hebrew text.

	Total	a	b
17 Superscription , וַיִּקְבֹּץ דָּוִד אֶת־תְּקִינָה תְּזַאֲתָה,	5	5	
which is clearly על־שָׁאוּל וְעַל־יְהוֹנָתָן בְּנָוֹ:	5		5
18 a continuation וַיֹּאמֶר לְלֵבָד בְּנֵי־יְהוּדָה קִשְׁתָּה	5	5	
of the preceding הִנֵּה כְּתוּבָה עַל־סֵפֶר תִּישָׁר:	5		5
narrative. Total, v. 17-18	20	= 10	+ 10

19 Refrain	הַצְבִי יִשְׂרָאֵל עַל־בְּמוֹתַיָּךְ חֲלָלָהּ	1	5	5	
	Note the <i>inclusio</i> with v. 25 : אֵיךְ נִפְלְאוּ גִבּוֹרִים :		3		3
20	אֶל־תִּגְדּוּ בְּנֹתַי	2	3	3	
	אֶל־תִּבְשְׂרוּ בְּחוֹצֹת אֲשַׁקְלֹון־		4	4	
	פֶּן־תִּשְׁמַחְנָה בְּנֹת פְּלִשְׁתִּים	3	4		4
	פֶּן־תִּעֲלֶזְנָה בְּנֹת הָעַרְלִים :		4		4
	Strophe 1 Total, v. 19-20		23	= 12	+ 11
	Total, v. 17-20		43	= 22	+ 21
21	הָרִי בְּגִלְבַּע אֶל־טַל	4	4	4	
	וְאֶל־מָטָר עֲלֵיכֶם		3	3	
	וְשִׁדְי תְרוֹמַת־		2	2	
	כִּי שָׁם נִגְעַל מִגֵּן גִּבּוֹרִים	5	5		5
	מִגֵּן שְׂאוּל בְּלִי מוֹשִׁיחַ בְּשִׁמּוֹן :		5		5
	Strophe 2 Total, v. 21		19	= 9	+ 10
	Total, v. 20-21		34	= 16	+ 18
	Canto I Total, v. 19-21		42	= 21	+ 21
22-23 Central core:	מַדְמָם חֲלָלִים מִחֲלָב גִּבּוֹרִים	6	4	4	
Saul and Jonathan	קִשְׁת יִהְיוּנָתָן לֹא נִשּׁוּג אַחֲוָהּ		5	5	
mentioned together:	וְתָרַב שְׂאוּל לֹא תָשׁוּב רִיקָם :		5		5
Chiasmus!	שְׂאוּל וִיהוּנָתָן הַנְּאֻחֵכִים וְהַנְּעִימָם	7	4	4	
Note the pairing	בְּחַיֵּיהֶם וּבְמוֹתָם לֹא נִפְרְדוּ		4	4	
of their names	מִנְשָׁרָיִם קָלוּ מֵאַרְיוֹת גִּבּוֹרִי :		4		4
and qualities	Canto II Strophe 3, v. 22-23		26	= 17	+ 9
to accentuate their togetherness!	Total, v. 19-23		68	= 38	+ 30
24	בְּנֹת יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶל־שְׂאוּל בְּכִינָהּ	8	5	5	
	הַמִּלְבָּשָׁכֶם שְׁנֵי עִם־עַדְנָיִם		4		4
	הַמְעֵלָה עַד־י זָהָב עַל לְבוּשְׁכֶן :		5		5
25 Refrain	אֵיךְ נִפְלְאוּ גִבּוֹרִים בְּתוֹךְ הַמִּלְחָמָהּ	9	5	5	
	Note <i>inclusio</i> with v. 19 : יִהְיוּנָתָן עַל־בְּמוֹתַיָּךְ חֲלָלָהּ :		4		4
	Strophe 4 Total, v. 24-25		23	= 10	+ 13
	Total, v. 21-25		68	= 36	+ 32
26	צָר־לִי עָלֶיךָ אַחִי יִהְיוּנָתָן	10	5	5	
	נַעֲמֶתָ לִי מְאֹדָה		3	3	
	נִפְלְאָתָהּ אַהֲבָתְךָ לִי	11	3		3
	מֵאַהֲבַת נָשִׁים :		2		2
27 Note the <i>inclusio</i> with v. 19	אֵיךְ נִפְלְאוּ גִבּוֹרִים	12	3	3	
	וַיֵּאבְדוּ כָלִי מִלְחָמָהּ : פ		3	3	0
	Strophe 5 Total, v. 26-27		19	= 14	+ 5
	Canto III Total, v. 24-27		42	= 24	+ 18
	Total, v. 22-27		68	= 41	+ 27
	Total, v. 19-27		110	= 62	+ 48
	Total, v. 17-27		130	= 72	+ 58

Observations

1. In terms of its 110 words, the arithmetic centre falls on the **26** words in Canto II (22-23), flanked by **42** (3x14) words on either side (42 + **26** + 42), which evidently constitute the consciously designed meaningful centre:

מִדַּם חַלְלִים מִחֶלֶב גְּבוּרִים ²²	From the blood of the slain, from the fat of the warriors
קֶשֶׁת יִהְיֶה לֹא נִשְׁוֹב אַחֲרָיו	The bow of Jonathan did not turn back
וְחֶרֶב שָׁאוּל לֹא תָשׁוּב רֵיקָם:	And the sword of Saul returned not empty.
שָׁאוּל וַיהוֹנָתָן הַנְּאֻהָבִים וְהַנְּעִימִם ²³	Saul and Jonathan, beloved and lovely
בְּחַיָּהֶם וּבְמוֹתָם לֹא נִפְרְדּוּ	Neither in life nor in death were they parted
מִנְּשָׂרִים קָלוּ מֵאַרְיֵי גְּבֻרִים:	Swifter than eagles were they, stronger than lions.

These words stand out in the Lament by the fact that Saul and Jonathan are here mentioned together for the first time, twice and chiasmically. Saul has already been referred to in v. 21. Their togetherness is graphically expressed by the skilful pairing of their military qualities (in boxes). This very personal tone of the elegy enhances the meaningfulness of the arithmetic centre.

The **42** words flanking the meaningful centre have consciously been chosen, because the number **42** (3x14), the numerical value of David (4+6+4=14) represents the 'signature' of David as the 'author' of the Lament. For the use of 'signatures' of main characters in the text, see pp. 2-3 in my Analysis of [1 Samuel](#).

See also Observation 3 in my Analysis of [Psalm 3](#), the very first Davidic Psalm (where we find the same device).

2. The numerical structure is reinforced by the coinciding framework in terms of its 3 cantos (I, vs. 19-21, II, vs. 22-23, III, vs. 24-26) 5 strophes, 12 verselines and 28 cola:

vs. 19-20	Strophe 1	3 vsl. 6 cola	23 words	} 42 42
v. 21	Strophe 2	2 vsl. 5 cola	19 words	
vs. 22-23	Strophe 3	2 vsl. 6 cola	26 words	
vs. 24-25	Strophe 4	2 vsl. 5 cola	23 words	
vs. 26-27	Strophe 5	3 vsl. 6 cola	19 words.	

The corresponding Strophes 1 and 5 have 3 vsl., 6 cola each, **42** words together. The corresponding Strophes 2 and 4 have 2 vsl., 5 cola each, **42** words together. The corresponding Cantos I and III have 5 verselines, **11** cola and **42** words each. Cantos I-II (19-23) and II-III have (22-27) **7** verselines, **17** cola and **68** (4x17) words each. Finally, the larger core, Strophes 2-4 (vs. 21-25), is made up of **68** (19+26+23) words.

This meticulously designed framework is very reminiscent of the Last Words of David in [2 Samuel 23](#). In the Second Book of Samuel, the two passages clearly function as a device for inclusion and may stem from the same author.

3. Note that the refrain in **vs. 19** and **25** functions as an *inclusio* to delimit vs. 19-25, the more general lament, in which the women play a crucial role. There are strong caesurae between vs. 18||19 and between vs. 25||26. The general lament is differentiated from vs. 26-27, which contains the very personal lament by David, and the conclusion. There is also a clear caesura between vs. 26||27, David's passionate speech directly addressed to his 'brother' Jonathan (26), and the conclusion (27). Part of the refrain in **v. 19** and **v. 27** delimits the entire Lament, vs. 19-27.

© 2008 Revised 2014

Dr. C.J. Labuschagne

Brinkhorst 44

9751 AT Haren (Gron)

The Netherlands

labuschagne.cj@gmail.com

Senior Lecturer in Semitic Languages (retired),

University of Pretoria, South Africa

and

Professor of Old Testament (retired),

University of Groningen, The Netherlands