The Song of Hannah in 1 Samuel 2— Logotechnical Analysis

Guidelines

- Please read the General Introduction and the Introduction to the Embedded Poetry.
- For common features found in the numerical analysis charts, see Key to the charts.

The Literary Context of the Song of Hannah: 1Sam. 1:1-2:11

- The literary context framing the Song of Hannah is the story of Samuel's birth and childhood until his mother made him over to YHWH. The framework, 1 Sam. 1:1-2:11, is a masterpiece of numerical composition. The following survey of its numerical features shows that it was meticulously composed step by step according to the different scenes in the story by means of significant structuring numbers: the numerical values of the names Samuel (53), Elkanah (51), and Hannah (27), and the divine name number **17**. This also holds true for the words spoken by Elkanah, Eli, and Hannah.

1:1-3	The setting of the stage	**53** words (שְׁמוּאֵל = 21+13+6+1+12 = **53**)
1:2-3	The situation at Shiloh	**34** (2 x **17**) words
1:4-6	Peninnah and Hannah	**34** (2 x **17**) words
1:4-8	Elkanah and his wives	**51** in narrative (אֶלְקָנָה = 1+12+19+14+5=**51**)
1:7-8	Elkanah comforts Hannah	**32** words (*kbwd* = 20+2+6+4 = **32**)
1:9-11	Hannah's vow	**53** words (שְׁמוּאֵל = 21+13+6+1+12 = **53**)
1:12-14	Eli rebukes Hannah	**34** (2 x **17**) words
1:15-16	Hannah's response	**32** words (*kbwd* = 20+2+6+4 = **32**)
1:17-18	Eli rehabilitates Hannah	**27** words (חַנָּה = 8+14+6 = **27**)
1:19	Back home in Ramah	**17** words
1:19-20	Samuel's birth	**31** words (וַיְהִי, 'it happened' = 6+10+5+10=**31**)
1:21-23	Hannah nurses her son	**54** words (2 x **27**)
1:19-23	Samuel's childhood	**85** (5 x **17** = **53** + **32**) words
1:24	Hannah takes him to Shiloh	**17** words
1:25-27	Hannah pays her vow	**34** (2 x **17**) words
1:28	Hannah makes Samuel over	14 words
1:21-28	The family at Shiloh	**119** (**7** x **17**) words
1:21–2:1a + 11	The framework	**136** (8 x **17**) words.

Here is a survey of the words in the speeches:

Elkanah:	15 (v. 8) + 12 (v. 23) = **27** words (חַנָּה = 8+14+6 = **27**)
Eli:	7 (v. 14) + 10 (v. 17) = **17** words in total
Hannah:	**26** (v. 11) + 29 (vs. 15-16) + 4 (v. 18) + 12 (v. 22) + 36 = 107,
	(that is **55** words in distress and **52** (2 x **26**) no longer downcast)

Hannah's Song 113 (2:1b-10), which gives the grand total of **220** words (20 x **11**, the number of fulfilment we encountered in the Song of Deborah).

This is the setting of the Song in its wider context, 1:21-2:11:

1:21-28	Narrative about Samuel's family in Shiloh	**119** (**7** x **17**) words
2:1a	Introduction to the Song of Hannah	**3** w. ⎫
2:1b-10	The Song of Hannah	113 w. ⎬ **130** w.
2:11	Conclusion of the story of Samuel's nativity	**14** w. ⎭
1:21–2:1a + 11	The direct narrative framework has in total	**136** (8 x **17**) words.

The number of words in the Song, 113, and its direct framework, **17** (**3** + **14**), was deliberately chosen to achieve the marvellous number **130** (5 x **26**).

- This striking numerical evidence raises the question whether the Song is to be regarded as an inset hymn that was transferred from its original *Sitz im Leben* and inserted into the story of Samuel's nativity. As far as I could check, this is the commonly held view among scholars, even though they readily concede that the Song is not wholly unsuited in its presumed secondary context. Scholars do recognize that the Song has not inappropriately been placed on Hannah's lips, but they fail to draw the only correct conclusion, namely that it was specifically composed to suit its present context. In my opinion, Hannah's Song is integral to Samuel's nativity story and contemporary with the literary personage she represents.

What applies to the Song at the Reed Sea in Exodus 15, the Song of Moses in Deuteronomy 32, and the Song of Deborah in Judges 5, also holds true for the Song of Hannah. It was composed along with its literary context as an *embedded* hymn. This Song is so intimately interwoven with its Framework that it cannot possibly be lifted from its context as though it were an inset hymn. The Song of Hannah was not inserted as an existing hymn into an extant account, but was clearly woven from the same fabric as the material surrounding it to express primarily Hannah's elevated condition: her joy over the birth and the dedication of Samuel to YHWH's service.

There are several unmistakable connections between the preceding narrative and the Song, e.g., the fact that Hannah is *barren* (1:6) and the mention of *'the barren woman'* in 2:5; the fact that she went *hungry* (1:7) and the explicit reference to *'the hungry'* in 2:5; the fact that she is *tormented and humiliated* by her rival Peninnah and *unable to resist* her (1:6) and the reference to her *'gloating over her enemies'* in 2:1 and the reference to *'the feeble'* in 2:4, and to YHWH's *'lifting the weak out of the dust'* in 2:8.

At the same time the Song strongly alludes to the central theme in the Book(s) of Samuel: the preparations to pave the way to designate a king as YHWH's 'anointed'. It is important to note that in the very first verseline Hannah expresses her joy over *her own elevated condition*, being the mother of Samuel (v. 1):
    My heart exults in YHWH! My *horn* is raised by my God!
And in the last verselines she expresses the hope that YHWH will *elevate his anointed* and establish his kingship (v. 10):
    May he endow *his king* with strength and raise the *horn of his anointed*!
The very last word, מְשִׁיחוֹ, 'his anointed' (v. 10e), is a powerful key-word unambiguously alluding to the enthronement of David (compare Ps. 132:17).
In addition, the other leading theme of the Song, the *elevation of the meek and the weak* (vs. 4-5), strongly alludes to the *elevation of Samuel, Saul, and David*, from humble circumstances to distinction and power, which constitutes the heart of the narrative in the Book(s) of Samuel. The Song subtly but clearly portends the events to come. This also holds true for the downfall of the house of Eli, seeing the allusion in 2:10 to the name Eli by means of the appellative עֶלִי, 'The High One' – see the note below the chart.

This is a clear indication that - as the follow-up to the Song at the Reed Sea, the Song of Moses and the Song of Deborah - the Song of Hannah is the next poetic stepping-stone in the Story of Israel towards the ultimate goal of the Exodus: the establishment of a settled nationhood for the people of Israel under a king chosen by YHWH.
The last poetic stepping-stone is the Song of David in 2 Samuel 22, celebrating the foundation of the Davidic kingdom. The Song of Hannah at the beginning of the Book(s) of Samuel, and the Song of David at the end, function as a compositional device for inclusion to illustrate the unity of the Book(s) of Samuel and the logical flow of thought. Note how both songs begin by using the metaphor of the *raised horn,* symbolizing *elevation* (compare 1 Sam. 2:1 and 2 Sam. 22:3), and how they end similarly by paralleling the terms *"his king"* and *"his anointed"* (cf. 1 Sam. 2:10 and 2 Sam. 22:51).
In fact, there are several conspicuous similarities between the Song of Hannah and this Song of David, which not only demonstrate their close relationship, but also suggest common authorship. Among them is the theme of YHWH's incomparability (1 Sam. 2:2 and 2 Sam. 22:32 – compare also Exod. 15:10 and Deut. 32:39).

This important theme is another feature showing that the two Songs were specifically composed to suit their context in the Samuel narrative.

The fact that the Song was composed along with its framework, as I have argued, does of course not entail that Hannah composed the Song. Personages do not produce literature; they are part of it, and what they say or sing is placed on their lips by the author of the work in question. The poet was the co-author/redactor of the Story of Ancient Israel (Genesis-Kings), who produced his poems in close cooperation with the author/redactor. In my opinion, he may be the author/redactor of all embedded hymns in Exodus-Kings, the poetic stepping-stones from the Exodus event to the establishment of the kingship: the Song at the Reed Sea, the Song of Moses, the Blessing of Moses, the Song of Deborah, the Song of Hannah, and the Song of David.

Special Features of 1 Samuel 2:1-10

- The Song of Hannah exhibits the typical characteristics of the numerical compositions we find in the Book of Psalms. The psalm has a distinct middle in terms of words and cola, v. 6a: "It is YHWH who puts to death and brings to life", which has clearly been designed as its meaningful centre on word- and colon level. The 3 middle words (113 = 55 + 3 + 55) coincide precisely with the middle colon, which is flanked by **17** cola on either side (35 = **17** + 1 + **17**). The meaningful centre is extra focused on by the middle instance of the **9** occurrences of the name YHWH in v. 6a: 9 = 4 + **1** +4. In addition to the meaningful centre on word- and colon level, as in many other psalms, the poem has a larger meaningful centre constituted by the middle strophe, vs. 6-7. See Observation 1.
- As in many psalms, syntax is used to weave extra divine name numbers into the text, achieving exactly **85** (5 x **17**) words in the main clauses (Column c) and 28 in the subordinate *ki*-clauses (Column d).
- Another feature the poem shares with other psalms is the use of the numerical value of a keyword to define the number of words in (part of) the text: the 58 words in vs. 6-10 represent the numerical value of the important keyword מְשִׁיחוֹ, 'his anointed' (v. 10e).

Strophic structure - Canto/Stanza boundary: ||

- Labuschagne: 1b-e, 2-3 || 4-5, 6-7, 8 || 9, 10 (3 cantos with **7** strophes in a menorah pattern, 16 verselines and 35 cola). I take v. 1b-e and v. 10 as distinct strophes on the basis of content and their function as a device for inclusion. See Observation 2.
- Fokkelman (*NAPS* IV, Assen 1993, pp. 73-111): 1b-2, 3 || 4-5, 6-7, 8 || 9-10a, 10b-e (3 stanzas with **7** strophes, **17** verselines and 35 cola, taking vs. 8a-b, c-d, e-f, and 9a-b and 9c-10a as separate verselines).
- Freedman ("Psalm 113 and the Song of Hannah", in: *Poetry, Pottery, and Prophecy,* Winona Lake, Indiana, 1980, pp. 243-261): Opening: 1a-3b || Divider I: 3cd || Stanza I: 4-5 || Main Divider [II]: 6-7 || Stanza II: 8a-f || Divider III: 8gh || Closing: 9-10.

Logotechnical analysis

- Columns **a** and **b** show the number of words before and after the atnach.
- Column **c**: words in the main clauses; **d**: words in the subordinate clauses.
- The verselines are numbered in the column to the right of the Hebrew text.

			Total		a		b		c		d
1	Introduction:	וַתִּתְפַּלֵּל חַנָּה וַתֹּאמַר	3	=	3	+	0				
		עָלַץ לִבִּי בַּיהוָה¹ 1	3		3				3		
		רָמָה קַרְנִי בַּיהוָה² ^	3		3				3		
		רָחַב פִּי עַל־אוֹיְבַי 2	4				4		4		
		כִּי שָׂמַחְתִּי בִּישׁוּעָתֶךָ׃	3				3				3
	Strophe 1	Total, v. 1b-e	13	=	6	+	7	=	10	+	3

	Hebrew	v	Total				
2	אֵין־קָד֣וֹשׁ כַּיהוָ֑ה³	3	3	3		3	
	כִּ֣י אֵ֣ין בִּלְתֶּ֑ךָ^		3		3		3
	וְאֵ֥ין צ֖וּר כֵּאלֹהֵֽינוּ׃		3		3		3
	Total, v. 1b-2		22	= 12	+ 10	= **13**	+ 9
3	אַל־תַּרְבּ֤וּ תְדַבְּרוּ֙ גְּבֹהָ֣ה גְבֹהָ֔ה	4	5	5		5	
	יֵצֵ֥א עָתָ֖ק מִפִּיכֶ֑ם^		3	3		3	
	כִּ֣י אֵ֤ל דֵּעוֹת֙ יְהוָ֔ה⁴	5	4		4		4
	וְל֥וֹ נִתְכְּנ֖וּ עֲלִלֽוֹת׃		3		3		3
	Total, v. 3		15	= 8	+ 7	= 8	+ 7
	Strophe 2 Total, v. 2-3		24	= 14	+ 10	= 11	+ 13
	Canto I Total, v. 1b-3		**37**	= 20	+ **17**	= 21	+ 16
4	קֶ֤שֶׁת גִּבֹּרִים֙ חַתִּ֔ים^	6	3	3		3	
	וְנִכְשָׁלִ֖ים אָ֥זְרוּ חָֽיִל׃		3		3	3	
	Total, v. 4		6	= 3	+ 3	= 6	+ 0
5	שְׂבֵעִ֤ים בַּלֶּ֙חֶם֙ נִשְׂכָּ֔רוּ	7	3	3		3	
	וּרְעֵבִ֖ים חָדֵ֑לּוּ^ עַד		3	2	1	3	
	עַד־עֲקָרָה֙ יָלְדָ֣ה שִׁבְעָ֔ה	8	3		3	3	
	וְרַבַּ֥ת בָּנִ֖ים אֻמְלָֽלָה׃		3		3	3	
	Total, v. 5		12	= 5	+ 7	= 12	+ 0
	Strophe 3 Total, v. 4-5		18	= 8	+ 10	= 18	+ 0
	Total, v. 3-5		33	= 16	+ **17**	= **26**	+ 7
	Total, v. 1b-5		55	= 28	+ 27	= **39**	+ 16

6   Middle words of poem: יְהוָ֔ה⁵ מֵמִ֣ית וּמְחַיֶּ֑ה^ | 9 | 3 | 3 | | 3 |

$113 = 55 + \boxed{3} + 55$ מוֹרִ֥יד שְׁא֖וֹל וַיָּֽעַל׃ | 3 | | 3 | 3 |

Middle colon: $35 = \mathbf{17} + \boxed{1} + \mathbf{17}$ Total, v. 6 | 6 | = 3 | + 3 | = 6 | + 0

7 Vs. 6-7, middle strophe, יְהוָ֖ה⁶ מוֹרִ֣ישׁ וּמַעֲשִׁ֑יר^ | 10 | 3 | 3 | | 3 |

$(7 = 3 + \boxed{1} + 3)$, מַשְׁפִּ֖יל אַף־מְרוֹמֵֽם׃ | 3 | | 3 | 3 |

the meaningful centre   Total, v. 7 | 6 | = 3 | + 3 | = 6 | + 0

on strophic level   Strophe 4   Total, v. 6-7 | 12 | 6 | + 6 | 12 | + 0

	Total, v. 1b-7		67	= **34**	+ 33	= **51**	+ 16
8	מֵקִ֥ים מֵעָפָ֖ר דָּ֑ל	11	3	3		3	
	מֵֽאַשְׁפֹּת֙ יָרִ֣ים אֶבְי֔וֹן		3	3		3	
	לְהוֹשִׁיב֙ עִם־נְדִיבִ֔ים	12	3	3		3	
	וְכִסֵּ֥א כָב֖וֹד יַנְחִלֵ֑ם^		3	3		3	
	כִּ֤י לַֽיהוָה֙⁷ מְצֻ֣קֵי אֶ֔רֶץ	13	4		4		4
	וַיָּ֥שֶׁת עֲלֵיהֶ֖ם תֵּבֵֽל׃		3		3		3
	Strophe 5 Total, v. 8		19	= 12	+ 7	= 12	+ 7
	Canto II Total, v. 4-8		**49**	= **26**	+ 23	= 42	+ 7
	Total, v. 3-8		64	= **34**	+ 30	= 50	+ 14
	Total, v. 1b-8		86	= 46	+ 40	= 63	+ 23

	Hebrew	v.						
9	רַגְלֵי חֲסִידוֹ יִשְׁמֹר	14	3	3		3		
	וּרְשָׁעִים בַּחֹשֶׁךְ יִדָּמּוּ^		3	3		3		
	כִּי־לֹא בְכֹחַ יִגְבַּר־אִישׁ׃		5		5	5		
	Strophe 6 Total, v. 9		11	= 6	+ 5	= 6	+ 5	
	Total, v. 1b-9		97	= **52**	+ 45	= 69	+ 28	
10 * See note below	יְהֹוָה[8] יֵחַתּוּ מְרִיבָיו	15	3	3		3		
	עָלוֹ בַּשָּׁמַיִם יַרְעֵם		3	3		3		
	יְהֹוָה[9] יָדִין אַפְסֵי־אָרֶץ^	16	4	4		4		
58 = מְשִׁיחוֹ	וְיִתֶּן־עֹז לְמַלְכּוֹ		3		3	3		
(13+21+10+8+6 = 58)	וְיָרֵם קֶרֶן מְשִׁיחוֹ׃ פ		3		3	3		
	Strophe 7 Total, v. 10		16	= 10	+ 6	= 16	+ 0	
	Canto III Total, v. 9-10		27	= 16	+ 11	= 22	+ 5	
	Total, v. 6-10		58	= **34**	+ 24	= 46	+ 12	
	Total, v. 4-10		76	= 42	+ **34**	= 64	+ 12	
	Total, v. 1b-10		113	= 62	+ 51	= **85**	+ 28	
11	וַיֵּלֶךְ אֶלְקָנָה הָרָמָתָה עַל־בֵּיתוֹ		5	5				
	וְהַנַּעַר הָיָה מְשָׁרֵת אֶת־יְהֹוָה		5		5			
	אֶת־פְּנֵי עֵלִי הַכֹּהֵן׃		4		4			
	Total narrative framework, v. 1a + 11		17	= 8	+ 9			
	Grand Total, v. 1-11		**130**	= 70	+ 60 (**130** = 5 x **26**).			

* The MT reading מְרִיבוֹ in v. 10a should be corrected to read מְרִיבָיו, 'his adversaries'. The word עָלוֹ in 10b, however, is more problematic. It could either be read עָלָיו, 'upon him', or עֶלְיוֹן, 'Most High', but still better, in my opinion, עָלִי, 'The High One'. Verse 10b then reads עָלִי בַּשָּׁמַיִם יַרְעֵם, "The High One will thunder from the heavens". The word עָלִי as such is not attested in MT, but it does occur in גֻּלֹּת עִלִּיֹּת, 'the higher pools', (Jos. 15:19 and Judg. 1:15 - *HALOT*, p. 832). Seeing the parallelism in 10a-b, the appellative עָלִי, 'High One', is evidently a designation of YHWH, a synonym of עֶלְיוֹן, which was deliberately chosen in the Song of Hannah to allude to the priest *Eli* (עֵלִי). See my Short Note, "The Divine Title עָלִי, 'The High One', in the Song of Hannah", *VT* 58 (2008), pp. 644-649.

Observations

1. In terms of the 113 words of the poem the arithmetic centre is constituted by the 3 words of v. 6a (113 = 55 + 3 + 55):

    יְהֹוָה מֵמִית וּמְחַיֶּה   It is YHWH who puts to death and brings to life.

    The pivotal positioning of these words is buttressed by the fact that they constitute the middle colon of the poem, significantly flanked by **17** cola on either side (35 = **17** + **1** + **17**). Moreover, the central position of v. 6a is additionally focused on by the middle instance of the **9** occurrences of the name יהוה in v. 6a: **9** = 4 + **1** + 4 (marked in the table above).

    These three words are part of the middle strophe, vs. 6-7, the larger meaningful centre, which expresses more fully YHWH's control of human affairs (7 = 3 + **1** + 3). It falls within the middle canto, Canto II, vs. 4-8, of which the leading theme is lowliness and elevation. The pivotal strophe reads as follows:

    יְהֹוָה מֵמִית וּמְחַיֶּה [6a] It is YHWH who puts to death and brings to life,

    מוֹרִיד שְׁאוֹל וַיָּעַל׃ [6b] He brings down to Sheol and he brings up.

    יְהֹוָה מוֹרִישׁ וּמַעֲשִׁיר^ [7a] It is YHWH who makes poor and makes rich,

    מַשְׁפִּיל אַף־מְרוֹמֵם׃ [7b] He brings low and he elevates.

    The meaningful centres express the conviction that YHWH is the God who acts in history and holds the destinies of individuals and nations in his hand. On the one

hand, it refers to Hannah's destiny to overcome her low condition and be *elevated* to her high position as the mother of Samuel. On the other hand, it alludes to the *elevation* of the people of Israel from bondage to nationhood, and to the *elevation* of Samuel, Saul, and David, the leading theme in the Book(s) of Samuel.
Moreover, the meaningful centre refers to God's judgement over the house of Eli.

2. The **7** strophes can be outlined in a symmetric menorah pattern:

> Strophe 1, v. 1b-e   Hannah exults in YHWH and rejoices in her *elevation*
> Strophe 2, vs. 2-3   The incomparable God governs human affairs
> Strophe 3, vs. 4-5   *Elevation* of the meek and the hungry
> Strophe 4, vs. 6-7   It is YHWH who controls the state of human beings
> Strophe 5, v. 8   *Elevation* of the weak and the poor
> Strophe 6, v. 9   YHWH guards the footsteps of his loyal servants
> Strophe 7, v. 10   He punishes his enemies and *elevates* his anointed.

Note how the key-word *'horn'*, symbolizing *elevation*, in Strophes 1 and 7 function as a device for inclusion.

3. I have already presented an overview of the impressive list of the significant structural numbers in the framework to the Song. Here are those occurring in the Song, of which some may be due to coincidence:

> v. 1b-e   **13** words, the numerical value of *'èchad*, 'one' (1 + 8 + 4 = **13**)
> vs. 1b-2   **13** words in the main clauses (Column c)
> vs. 1b-3   **17** words after *atnach*
> vs. 3-5   **17** words after *atnach*
> vs. 3-5   33 words, with **26** in the main clauses (Column c)
> vs. 1b-5   55 words, constituting the YHWH *'èchad* formula (**26** + **13** = **39**) in the main clauses (Column c), which buttresses the idea of YHWH's incomparability and uniqueness in v. 2
> vs. 1b-7   **34** (2 x **17**) words before *atnach*, with **51** (3 x **17**) in Column c
> vs. 4-8   **26** words before *atnach*
> vs. 3-8   **34** (2 x **17**) words before *atnach*
> vs. 1b-9   **52** (2 x **26**) words before *atnach*
> vs. 9-10   **27** words (the numerical value of Hannah: 8 + 14 + 5 = **27**)
> vs. 6-10   **34** (2 x **17**) words before *atnach*
> vs. 4-10   **34** (2 x **17**) words after *atnach*
> vs. 1b-10   **51** (2 x **26**) words after *atnach*
> vs. 1b-10   **85** (5 x **17**) words in the main clauses (Column c).

As in many psalms (e.g., 5, 6, 14, 30, 31, 33, 38, etc.), syntax has been used to create divine name numbers in terms of the differentiation between main clauses and subordinate clauses, here introduced by the conjunction *ki*, 'for/because'.

4. The name יהוה occurs 9 times in the Song, with the middle instance falling precisely in the arithmetic middle of the poem, v. 6a, where it highlights the meaningful centre. These 9 occurrences, together with the 21 occurrences in 1:1-28, and the 1 instance in the concluding narrative (v. 11), give **31** occurrences altogether in the entire story of Samuel's nativity. It is difficult to tell whether there is any relationship between the **31** occurrences of the divine name and the **31** words used to relate the birth of Samuel in vs. 19-20. This may be the case, seeing the conspicuous accumulation of occurrences especially at the end of chapter 1 (no less than 9x in vs. 21-28, against 12x in vs. 1-20), which may point to deliberate design.

Bibliography

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