



NUMERICAL SAYINGS IN THE OLD TESTAMENT  
A FORM-CRITICAL STUDY

SUPPLEMENTS  
TO  
VETUS TESTAMENTUM

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BY

W. M. W. ROTH



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## PREFACE

My interest in numerical sayings goes back to my student days. In 1959 I submitted a study of this genre entitled *The Numerical Saying in the Old Testament and in the Ancient Near East. An Investigation into the Early History of an Oral and Literary Genre* for an advanced degree in theology to Victoria University, University of Toronto, Ontario, Canada. While the present enquiry is indebted to that earlier study, it is based on a different approach to the subject and presents a new work.

I remember gratefully my theological teachers, especially Professor Gerhard von Rad, Heidelberg, who awakened in me the love for the Old Testament, and Professor R. Dobbie, Toronto, who supervised my postgraduate work. I am indebted to the late Professor J. Hempel and Professor H. Bardtke, Leipzig, who in private communications furnished valuable information. I am grateful to my wife for her constant help and encouragement.

Due to my present remote location, I have not been able to consult scholarly literature, especially original text editions, to the extent to which I would have liked. I can only hope that this lack does not seriously detract from the validity and the strength of the arguments presented.

Leonard Theological College  
Jabalpur, M.P., India  
February 20th, 1965.

W. M. W. ROTH

## ABBREVIATIONS

- A.N.E.T.* *Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament*, ed. by J. B. PRITCHARD, 2nd ed. (Princeton 1955)
- A.P.O.T.* *The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament*, ed. by R. H. CHARLES, 2 vols. (Oxford 1913)
- B.A.S.O.R.* *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* (Hew Haven)
- B.R.L.* Kurt GALLING, *Biblisches Reallexikon* (Tübingen 1937)
- B.Z.A.W.* *Beibefte, Z.A.W.* (Berlin)
- H.U.C.A.* *Hebrew Union College Annual* (Cincinnati)
- I.B.* *The Interpreter's Bible*, ed. by G. A. BUTTRICK (Nashville/New York 1952/57)
- I.D.B.* *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, ed. by G. A. BUTTRICK (Nashville/New York 1962)
- J.B.L.* *Journal of Biblical Literature* (Philadelphia)
- K.B.* L. KÖHLER/W. BAUMGARTNER, *Lexicon in Veteris Testamenti Libros* (Leiden 1953)
- Th.W.B.N.T.* *Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament*, ed. by G. KITTEL/G. FRIEDRICH (Stuttgart 1933 ff.)
- V.T.* *Vetus Testamentum* (Leiden)
- V.T.S.* *Supplements, V.T.* (Leiden)
- Z.A.W.* *Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* (Berlin)
- Z.D.M.G.* *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft* (Wiesbaden)
- Z.Th.K.* *Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche* (Tübingen)

## INTRODUCTION

One of the recent accomplishments of Biblical scholarship is the systematic and detailed description of the oral and literary patterns found in the Old Testament. It was HERMANN GUNKEL (1862-1932) who initiated the form-critical method, thereby adding to the exegetical tools of Biblical scholarship an instrument which proves to be an effective help in the interpretation of the Old Testament. Many new insights into the profile and character of Biblical texts have been made possible, and history as well as setting in life of almost all oral and literary patterns occurring in the Old Testament have been described. The standard introductions to the Old Testament bear witness to this and, at the same time, offer in concise form the results of form-critical research.

The present study is devoted to an oral and literary pattern which does not occur frequently in the Old Testament but which nevertheless deserves attention and detailed investigation: the numerical saying. The most familiar examples of this genre occur in the thirtieth chapter of the Book of Proverbs, where a collection of five numerical sayings is found (xxx 15-31).

Numerical sayings list a certain number of items which have one or more characteristic features in common. They are therefore made up of two parts: (1) the title-line and (2) the list. The title-line states (a) that which all the items have in common and (b) their number; the list enumerates these items. A survey of Old Testament numerical sayings reveals that they occur in both poetry and prose. Usually the title-line precedes the list. Sometimes it follows the list, thus producing an inverted numerical saying. In most cases it is also evident that the numerical saying is not merely a figure of speech but represents an oral and literary "Gattung". Hence this genre merits a form-critical study.

Numerical sayings have already received scholarly attention in various ways. S. R. DRIVER noted in his introduction the "peculiar" form of numerical sayings without, however, further discussing it.<sup>1)</sup> STUMMER<sup>2)</sup>

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<sup>1)</sup> S. R. DRIVER, *An Introduction to the Literature of the Old Testament*, 6th ed. (Edinburgh 1897), p. 402.

<sup>2)</sup> Friedrich STUMMER, *Der kritische Wert der altaramäischen Apikartexte aus Elephantine* (Münster i. W. 1914), pp. 58 f., 85 f.

and RANSTON<sup>1)</sup> noted the numerical saying found in the Aramaic version of the Aḥiqar tradition from Elephantine and argued that the Biblical pattern is dependent on it, thus describing it as “artificial and young”.<sup>2)</sup> No other scholar seems to have adopted this explanation of the genre. On the other hand, TORCZYNER’s suggestion to the effect that the pattern of the numerical saying developed out of the riddle<sup>3)</sup> has met with acceptance by many scholars.<sup>4)</sup> Others were critical of this theory,<sup>5)</sup> and it should be pointed out that even the scholars who advocate it do so by emphasizing that this is only a possibility or probability.<sup>6)</sup> HEMPEL refers to numerical sayings in connection with teaching practices and argues that the genre was, especially when containing references to animals, one of the teaching devices for imparting knowledge to poor or unwilling students.<sup>7)</sup> Similarly argues W. B. STEVENSON when he explains the occurrence of the numerical sequence  $x/x+1$  in the title-line of some numerical sayings (e.g. Prov. xxx 29) as “the creation of an influential teacher, who had noticed that he himself and others, when extemporising lists of parallel qualities, objects, etc., tended to begin sometimes by saying, “there are *three* things of such and such a character,—or rather—there are *four* that . . .””.<sup>8)</sup>

A different explanation of origin and function of the pattern has been advanced by A. ALT, with special reference to the collection Prov. xxx 15-31.<sup>9)</sup> He maintains that there the pattern of the numerical saying serves to formulate early Hebrew nature wisdom, a type of wisdom different from and probably earlier than the bulk of Old Tes-

<sup>1)</sup> Harry RANSTON, *The Old Testament Wisdom Books and Their Teaching* (London 1930), p. 57.

<sup>2)</sup> RANSTON, *loc.cit.*

<sup>3)</sup> Harry TORCZYNER, ‘The Riddle in the Bible’, *H.U.C.A.* I (1924), pp. 135 f.

<sup>4)</sup> E.g. Julius A. BEWER, *The Literature of the Old Testament*, rev ed.. (New York 1933), p. 312; Otto EISFELDT, *Einleitung in das Alte Testament*, 3rd ed. (Tübingen 1964), p. 114 f; Aage BENTZEN, *Introduction to the Old Testament*, vol. I. 5th ed. (Copenhagen 1959), p. 176; S. H. BLANK, ‘Riddle’, *I.D.B.* IV, p. 79; cf. also Ludwig KÖHLER, *Hebrew Man*, transl. by P. R. ACKROYD (London 1956), p. 105.

<sup>5)</sup> Charles Foster KENT and Millar BURROWS, *Proverbs and Didactic Poems* (New York 1927), p. 109.

<sup>6)</sup> EISSFELDT, *loc.cit.*; BLANK, *loc.cit.*

<sup>7)</sup> Joh. HEMPEL, ‘Pathos und Humor in der israelitischen Erziehung’, *B.Z.A.W.* 77 (1958), p. 73.

<sup>8)</sup> W. B. STEVENSON, ‘A Mnemonic Use of Numbers in Proverbs and Ben Sira’, *Glasgow University Oriental Society, Transactions* IX (1938/39), ed. by C. J. MULLO WEIR (Glasgow 1941), p. 30.

<sup>9)</sup> Albrecht ALT, ‘Die Weisheit Salomos’, *Theologische Literaturzeitung* 76 (1951), cols. 134-44 = *Kleine Schriften* II, pp. 90-99.

tament wisdom traditions. ALT describes this type of wisdom as "Mirabilienliteratur" and the numerical sayings employed in this connection as belonging to the "Gattung" of nature wisdom.<sup>1)</sup> He stresses the affinity of this type of wisdom to the description of natural phenomena and of animals in Job xxxviii-xli. He further draws into the discussion the alleged nature wisdom of King Solomon (1 Kings v 9-14 (*R.S.V.* iv 29-34)) along with lists of natural phenomena and onomastica known from ancient Mesopotamia and ancient Egypt. Since then several scholars have adopted ALT's interpretation; WEISER e.g. speaks of "encyclopaedic lists of nature knowledge similar to those in Babylonia and Egypt, which have been preserved in the numerical sayings" (scil. of Prov. xxx 15-31).<sup>2)</sup> Hence these scholars consider the reference to Solomon's nature wisdom important because it sets Israel's wisdom into the context of the wisdom of the ancient Near East (1 Kings v 10 f. (*R.S.V.* iv 30 f.):

... Solomon's wisdom surpassed the wisdom of all the people of the east, and all the wisdom of Egypt. For he was wiser than all other men, wiser than Ethan the Ezrahite and Heman, Calcol, and Darda, the sons of Mahol; and his fame was in all the nations round about.

Furthermore, a numerical saying from the Ras Shamra texts<sup>3)</sup> is adduced to illustrate the international character of wisdom traditions in general and of the pattern of the numerical saying in particular and demands that any discussion of this pattern be not limited to the Old Testament but give due weight to the international character of ancient wisdom traditions.

Recently a monograph on Prov. xxx was published by G. SAUER.<sup>4)</sup> The writer approaches the study of the pattern of the numerical saying on the basis of an examination of various stylistic usages employing numbers in Ugaritic and in Biblical Hebrew, viz., number, numerical sequence, and numerical saying. SAUER deals with Prov. xxx

<sup>1)</sup> ALT, *op.cit.*, p. 92.

<sup>2)</sup> Artur WEISER, *Introduction to the Old Testament*, transl. by D.M. BARTON (London 1961), p. 41; cf. Siegfried MORENZ, *Ägyptologie* (Leiden 1952), p. 198; Gerhard von RAD, *Theologie des Alten Testaments I* (München 1957), pp. 422 f.

<sup>3)</sup> Cyrus H. GORDON, *Ugaritic Manual* (Rome 1955), II, text 51, col. III, lines 17-21 (p. 140); transl. by H. L. GINSBERG, *A.N.E.T.*, p. 132 d. Cf. A. BEA, 'Der Zahlenspruch im Hebräischen und Ugaritischen', *Biblica* 21 (1940), pp. 196-98.

<sup>4)</sup> Georg SAUER, *Die Sprüche Agurs. Untersuchungen zur Herkunft, Verbreitung und Bedeutung einer biblischen Stilform unter besonderer Berücksichtigung von Proverbia c. 30* (Beiträge zur Wissenschaft vom Alten und Neuen Testament V, 4; Stuttgart 1963).

in his comparatively short chapter V on the basis of his findings. He argues that the pattern of the graded numerical saying belongs to the North-Canaanite literature. This may readily be granted as far as the *graded* numerical saying is concerned; the problem is only whether the graded numerical saying can thus be isolated from the general pattern of the numerical saying. SAUER argues that the graded numerical saying developed out of numerical sequences; he does not consider the pattern as an oral and literary genre comprehensively and in its own right.

The above survey of research in connection with the genre of the numerical saying shows that scholarly work in this field is limited to short treatments of and occasional references to this pattern, in various contexts and from different points of view. There is in any case no unanimity among scholars regarding origin and function of the pattern. A comprehensive study of the genre does not yet exist. The present investigation is undertaken in order to meet this need and to describe and evaluate the genre on the basis of representative examples found in the Old Testament. Ancient Near Eastern and Classical Greek texts, the literature of the intertestamental period, of nascent Christianity and of early Judaism will be drawn into the discussion as far as they can throw light on the pattern and offer clarification. Biblical texts are as a rule quoted according to the *R.S.V.* Where its verse numbering differs from that of M.T., both are given. Non-Biblical texts are quoted according to the standard editions and translations mentioned in each case. Since this is a form-critical study, textual and literary problems are discussed only if they have a direct bearing on the clarification of the form of a given numerical saying.

In a first chapter the structure of the numerical saying will be discussed. The second, third, and fourth chapters respectively are devoted to the three different usages of the genre which can be distinguished, namely, the narrative, the reflective, and the hortative. Each chapter is divided into sections according to the contents of the numerical sayings discussed. The conclusion sums up the results of the enquiry and discusses them in the light of research.

## CHAPTER ONE

### THE STRUCTURE OF THE NUMERICAL SAYING

A numerical saying is made up of two constituents: the title-line and the list. The *title-line* describes or alludes to that feature or those features which the items listed have in common. Sometimes, more than one feature is described only apparently, e.g. Ecclus. xxv 1: <sup>1)</sup>

My soul takes pleasure in three things,  
and they are beautiful in the sight of the Lord and of men: . . .

However, in this case the title-line is made up of two stichs in synthetic parallelism and hence there is really only one characteristic feature alluded to.

The peculiarity of the items listed is sometimes described with a single phrase only, especially when the numerical saying occurs in a narrative setting, e.g. Is. vii 4:

. . . these two smoldering stumps of firebrands, . . . the fierce anger of Rezin and Syria and the son of Remaliah . . .

In most cases, however, the description of the characteristic feature is a whole sentence, e.g. Jer. xv 3:

I will appoint over them four kinds of destroyers, says the LORD; the sword . . ., the dogs . . ., the birds . . . and the beasts . . .

There is no rigid form for the title-line, except when it is set in synonymous or synthetical parallelism. In that case the rules governing this Semitic poetic device make it necessary for the two parallel stichs to correspond to each other either synonymously or synthetically.

As far as the *number* is concerned, any number from 'one' <sup>2)</sup> upwards can occur. Most numerical sayings list two, three, or seven items. Higher numbers are naturally rare, but once even forty-eight items are listed (Pirqe Aboth vi 6). The symbolic character or sacred quality of certain numbers, e.g. 'seven', usually do not seem to play an

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<sup>1)</sup> Emendation according to the *R.S.V.*, on the basis of the Syriac version and the Vulgate.

<sup>2)</sup> Numerical sayings listing only one item are rare but especially noteworthy, cf. e.g. Ps. xxvii 4.

appreciable role when appearing in numerical sayings. On the other hand, the frequency and usefulness in daily life of numerical values like 'three' or 'seven' are mirrored in their frequent occurrences in numerical sayings. <sup>1)</sup>

A few poetical numerical sayings employ in their title-lines instead of one number two numbers, the second being one unit higher than the first one ( $x/x+1$ ), e.g. Prov. xxx 18:

Three things are too wonderful for me,  
four I do not understand: . . .

Examples of the pattern introduced thus are known as *graded* numerical sayings. In all these cases the numerical values are parallel to each other, the second numerical value being the one that is intended. It is a case of Semitic poetic parallelism, found in Akkadian, Ugaritic, Aramaic, and Hebrew, and is as pleasant to Semitic ears as it is strange to non-Semitic stylistics. The LXX has accordingly changed in all cases the second number from the original cardinal to its corresponding ordinal, cf. e.g. Prov. xxx 18, 21, 29 M.T. with their renderings in Syriac and the Targum on the one hand (retention of the second cardinal) and in the LXX and the Vulgate on the other hand (change to the corresponding ordinal). This change must have been made by the translators of the LXX and JEROME because they reasoned that, in the case of Prov. xxx 21 for instance, according to the M.T. a list of *seven* (three *and* four) items is to be expected. But as only four things are listed, the second ordinal can only be understood as an ordinal number. In that case three things and a *fourth* indeed add up to four items, the number of things actually listed. <sup>2)</sup>

Sometimes the title-line is split, so that the description of the characteristic feature appears at the beginning of the numerical saying and the numerical value at its end. Cf. e.g. 1. Chron. xxiii 9:

The sons of Shimei: Shelomoth, Haziel, and Haran, three.

Here and there the title-line appears after the list, e.g. Ex. xxi 10 f.:

If he takes another wife to himself, he shall not  
diminish her food, her clothing, or her marital rights.

<sup>1)</sup> Cf. below chapters II, III and IV concerning the function of the numerical value in each of the three usages of the genre.

<sup>2)</sup> SAUER, *op.cit.*, pp. 88, 90, 117 f. argues that the headline of the graded numerical saying with the text which follows is an expanded form of the numerical sequence. See, however, Wolfgang M. W. ROTH, 'The Numerical Sequence  $x/x+1$  in the Old Testament', *V.T.* XII (1962), pp. 302-7, for a discussion of the numerical sequence  $x/x+1$  in parallel stichs as typical example of Semitic parallelism.

And if he does not do these three things for her, she shall go out for nothing, without payment of money.

If, as in this case, the title-line follows the list, an *inverted* numerical saying has been formulated.<sup>1)</sup> Finally, there exist examples of the genre where the title-line either has disappeared or is implied without being given, e.g. Prov. xxx 11-14:<sup>2)</sup>

There are those who curse their fathers  
and do not bless their mothers.

There are those who are pure in their own eyes  
but are not cleansed of their filth.

There are those—how lofty are their eyes,  
how high their eyelids lift!

There are those whose teeth are swords,  
whose teeth are knives, . . .

Structure and form of the *list* vary as well. On the one hand, there are one-word enumerations such as Ezek. xiv 14 a:

. . . even if these three men, Noah, Daniel, and Job, were in it, . . .

On the other hand, the enumeration can grow into lengthy compositions such as the one found in Job xxxiii 14-28 where fourteen (!) verses describe two items. However, phrases or short sentences seem to be the rule, cf. e.g. Prov. xx 10:

Diverse weights and diverse measures  
are both alike an abomination to the LORD.

This example of the genre indicates that occasionally title-line and list are syntactically one sentence.

Numerical sayings can occur in both poetry and prose. When they occur in poetry, they tend to be more evenly built than their counterparts in prose. On the whole, numerical sayings in a narrative setting are in prose, e.g. 1. Sam. i 3b:

. . . at Shiloh, where the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, were priests of the LORD, . . .

<sup>1)</sup> There seems to exist no difference, except for the form, between the inverted numerical saying and its normally structured counterpart, as a comparison of Gen. vi 10 with ix 18 f. or of 2. Sam. ii 18 a with 1. Chron. ii 16 b indicates.

<sup>2)</sup> Charles FOSTER KENT and Millar BURROWS, *Proverbs and Didactic Poems* (New York 1927), p. 109, give a conjectural introduction to this numerical saying, after the analogy of Prov. vi 16. So also SAUER, *op.cit.*, p. 103.

while those used hortatively are often in poetic form, e.g. the Ten Commandments. However, the fact that a numerical saying occurs in poetry or in prose does not principally affect the basic structure of the genre.

The numerical saying can be defined as a type of list. What distinguishes it from all other types of lists is the use of a numerical value in the title-line. The numerical element adds a limiting factor and emphasizes the fact that a certain, exactly defined number of items shares this or that characteristic feature with each other. This added numerical factor is of comparatively little importance in numerical sayings found in a narrative setting but of great importance in reflective and hortative numerical sayings. In the reflective use of the pattern the number is that device through which an existing (or seemingly existing) and discovered structural order in different phenomena of nature, life, society, ect. is defined and fixed. Here the numerical value is the result of reflection and appears as the desired outcome of the reflection. In the hortative use of numerical sayings the number is important because it serves a mnemotechnical function. In this case the number is that device which helps men to fix securely in the mind a given number of requirements.

In the Old Testament a literary pattern occurs which is closely related to the genre of the numerical saying, i.e. the enumerating list. In this type of list the title-line states only the characteristic feature of the items listed, but in the list itself each item is connected with an ordinal number, e.g. 1. Chron. iii 15:

The sons of Josiah: Johanan the first-born, the second Jehoiakim, the third Zedekiah, the fourth Shallum.

The effect of the enumerating list is similar to that of the numerical saying, except that in the enumerating list each item listed is characterized as to the order of precedence it takes in relation to the other items listed. Examples of this genre occur especially in narrative settings. Instances of this pattern are drawn into the present discussion when they offer clarification.

HEMPEL has drawn attention to the fact that the genre of the numerical saying is related to the "Priamel", <sup>1)</sup> a genre found e.g. Amos iii 3-6. In this passage seven rhetorical questions are listed, each demonstrating the inescapability of the cause—effect relationship in

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<sup>1)</sup> Joh. HEMPEL, 'Pathos und Humor in der israelitischen Erziehung', *B.Z.A.W.* 77 (1958), p. 73, footnote 23.

nature and life. The list climaxes in the prophet's assertion that his own prophecy is nothing but the unavoidable result of its cause: God's speaking (iii 7 f.). The obvious connection between this genre of 'example listing' and the reflective usage of numerical sayings will be discussed below.

Similarly the relationship of the genre of the numerical saying to the riddle and to numerical sequences, both already mentioned above, merit further discussion. The concluding section will provide the opportunity to do this.

## CHAPTER TWO

### NARRATIVE NUMERICAL SAYINGS

#### GENEALOGICAL GROUPINGS

In almost all epic or narrative texts numerical sayings occur. The Old Testament is no exception. The Book of Ruth, for instance, opens by describing the background of the story that is to follow. After the time of the events is shortly characterized, the acting persons are mentioned in this way:

The name of the man was Elimelech and the name of his wife Naomi, and the names of his two sons were Mahlon and Chilion; . . . (i 2)

Thereafter, the story goes on to describe what happened to these persons in the land of Moab. The numerical saying “. . . the names of his two sons were Mahlon and Chilion. . .” does not stand by itself but is an integral part of the narrative, grouping together what naturally belongs together, and so supplying genealogical background knowledge. In this case the numerical saying cannot be isolated from its context; it originated together with it. However, the items which it groups together exist separately, belonging to each in certain respects. The two sons of Elimelech belong together as the two sons of one man and hence as brothers. There can be no doubt that this usage of the pattern is an unreflected one, the words coming, as it were, by themselves to the narrator’s lips.

A similar case is the reference to Eli’s sons (1. Sam. i 3; cf. ii 34):

. . . at Shiloh, where the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, were priests of the LORD.

The two sons’ names are mentioned in passing, supplying background information for the story of the plight of the house of Eli (cf. 1. Sam. iv 11). Here again the numerical saying is not an independent literary unit but an integral part of the narrative context in which it occurs. The two sons of Eli, on the other hand, are naturally a group in that they, and for the purposes of the story, they alone, are descended from Eli.

There exist several other examples of the same genealogical usage of the numerical saying, e.g. the list of Moses’ two sons by Zipporah (Ex. xviii 3 f.), of Zadok’s two sons (2. Sam. xv 27), and of the two

sons of Saul by Rizpah (2. Sam. xxi 8). The list of Joseph's two sons adds a descriptive enumeration (Gen. xli 50-52):

... Joseph had two sons, whom Asenath, the daughter of Potiphara priest of On, bore to him. Joseph called the name of the first-born Manasseh, ... the name of the second he called Ephraim, ...

Here again the numerical saying is an integral part of its context and originated along with it. It adds, however, an enumeration within the list, and thus establishes the order of precedence of the two sons, a precedence which was to become the subject of intertribal jealousy (cf. Gen. xlviii 8-22).

The simple list-like numerical saying occurs most frequently in epic or narrative texts, e.g. Gen. x 25 (= 1. Chron. i 19):

To Eber were born two sons: the name of the one was Peleg, ... and his brother's name was Joktan.

This numerical saying appears within a series of lists and list-like material, supplying genealogical information for the family of Shem. Sons are often listed in this manner, but sometimes also daughters are listed. In that case the order of precedence is usually stated, especially if the information is necessary for a proper understanding of the tradition as a whole. This is obvious in the case of the two daughters of Saul (1. Sam. xiv 49), and more so in the case of Laban's two daughters (Gen. xxix 16):

Now Laban had two daughters; the name of the older was Leah, and the name of the younger was Rachel.

Numerical sayings listing three sons occur with reference to the sons of Noah (Gen. vi 10, cf. ix 18 f.), of Anak (Josh. xv 14), of Jesse (1. Sam. xvii 13; a numerical saying with an enumerating list), of Benjamin, of Shimei, and of Mushi (1. Chron. vii 6, xxiii 9 and 23; inverted numerical sayings). The three sons of Zeruiah are listed 1. Chron. ii 16 b in a numerical saying with split title-line:

The sons of Zeruiah: Abishai, Joab, and Asahel, three.

2. Sam. ii 18, however, lists them in a normally structured numerical saying:

And the three sons of Zeruiah were there, Joab, Abishai, and Asahel.

Inverted numerical sayings listing four sons occur 1. Chron. iii 5, vii 1 and xxiii 12. The list of the four sons of Shimei shows that a set

pattern of the title-line does not exist, because the phrase "the sons of Shimei" occurs both as a title-line without number at the beginning and as a title-line with a numeral at the end of the numerical saying (1. Chron. xxiii 10):

... the sons of Shimei: Jahath, Zina, and Jeush, and Beriah. These four were the sons of Shimei.

Five sons are listed 1. Chron. ii 6, vii 3 and 7. The list of the five sons of Judah is subdivided according to their mothers (1. Chron. ii 3 f.):

The sons of Judah: Er, Onan, and Shelah; these three Bath-shua the Canaanitess bore to him ... His daughter-in-law Tamar also bore him Perez and Zerah. Judah had five sons in all.

This last example of the genre shows that it can easily be adapted to varying requirements, such as subdivision into smaller groups.

Six sons are listed in 1. Chron. iii 22, <sup>1)</sup> viii 38, and xxv 3; seven are listed in 1. Chron. v 13; eight in Gen. xxii 21-23; nine in 1. Chron. iii 6 f., and fourteen in 1. Chron. xxv 4 f.

In Gen. xxxv 22 b - 26 a the twelve sons of Jacob are listed according to their mothers:

... the sons of Jacob were twelve. The sons of Leah: Reuben ..., Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, and Zebulun. The sons of Rachel: Joseph and Benjamin. The sons of Bilhah, Rachel's maid: Dan and Naphtali. The sons of Zilpah, Leah's maid: Gad and Asher.

This text appears at first sight as a numerical saying in a narrative setting. It lists a given number of sons, like the other numerical sayings already discussed. However, the lists of Jacob's twelve sons, of the twelve princes descended from Ishmael (Gen. xvii 20, xxv 12-16), and of the twelve sons of Nahor (Gen. xxii 20-24) refer to the tradition alive in each group that each group of twelve tribes was one people in and through their descent from one patriarch. Hence the numerical sayings which give these lists of twelve are traditions which stress the unity of certain tribal federations. The number 'twelve', as is well known from the various periods of Israel's history, was considered basic and was never changed, even though historical circumstances changed and the names of the tribes counted in this way. <sup>2)</sup> The

<sup>1)</sup> The list gives only five names but the (divided) title-line speaks of six. Textual corruption through dittography is probably the origin of this disagreement cf. Wilhelm RUDOLPH, *Chronikbücher* (Tübingen 1955), pp. 28, 31.

<sup>2)</sup> M. H. POPE, 'Twelve', *I.D.B.* IV, p. 719.

list of the twelve tribes of Jacob/Israel became common knowledge and was reproduced in various forms, whenever needed, e.g. Gen. xlix 1 b - 47 and Num. xxvi 4-51. The numerical saying listing the twelve tribes of Israel quoted above did therefore not originate within the narrative setting in which it now appears. It must be interpreted as a numerical saying which is the result of human reflection on the course of history, discovering and defining a certain order or structure in the events of history: There were *twelve* tribes who once united to form Israel. <sup>1)</sup>

Numerical sayings occurring in a narrative setting and listing a number of sons descended from one father also appear in non-Biblical texts. Several examples are found in Homer, e.g. Iliad xx 231 f.: <sup>2)</sup>

Three brave sons were born of Tros:  
Ilos, Assarakos, and divine Ganymed.

This numerical saying appears in a narrative setting, supplying genealogical background information in very much the same manner as e.g. Ruth i 2 or Gen. xli 50-52. Other examples of the genealogical usage of the genre, referring to sons and daughters, occur in Iliad v 10 f.; vi 196 f.; ix 144 f.; xiv 115-17; xv 187 f.; Odyssey xi 307 f. Further examples of this usage could no doubt be collected from the epic or narrative literature of other cultures.

Here and there numerical sayings are employed with reference to other genealogical groupings. Gen. iv 19 lists the two *wives* of Lamech:

And Lamech took two wives; the name of the one was  
Adah, and the name of the other Zillah.

The genealogical background information given in this text is needed for a proper understanding of what follows (iv 20-24). In a similar way are listed the two wives of Elkanah (1. Sam. i 2), of David (1. Sam. xxvii 3; cf. 2. Sam. ii 2) and of Ashhur (1. Chron. iv 5). Deut. xxi 15-17, which is designed to safeguard the rights of the first-born son in case he is the offspring of the 'hated' (disliked) wife, begins with the sentence:

If a man has two wives, the one loved and the other  
disliked, . . .

<sup>1)</sup> This is not to deny the probability that the number 'twelve' is in this case connected with the twelve months of the solar year because it is likely that each of the twelve tribes was responsible for the upkeep of the common sanctuary for one month of the year, cf. Martin Noth, *Geschichte Israels*, 3rd ed. (Göttingen 1956), pp. 85 f.

<sup>2)</sup> Paulus CAUER, ed., *Homērou Epē* (Leipzig 1821), p. 436.

Here also the numerical saying as part of a (legal) narrative setting supplies genealogical information necessary for an understanding of the legal case discussed.

In the New Testament an example of the genealogical use of the pattern occurs with reference to *brothers* (Mt. iv 18):

As he walked by the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon who is called Peter and Andrew his brother, . . .

In the same chapter of the Gospel according to St. Matthew James and John, the two Zebedees, are mentioned in a similar fashion (iv 21).

#### SOCIAL GROUPINGS

In narrative texts sometimes occur numerical sayings which list by name a number of persons who played a role in certain historical or fictitiously historical events. For instance, when different evils had befallen Job, his three *friends* came to comfort him (Job ii 11 a):

Now when Job's three friends heard of all this evil that had come upon him, they came each from his own place, Eliphaz the Temanite, Bildad the Shuhite, and Zophar the Naamathite.

Here the numerical saying, imbedded in its narrative context and an integral part of it, supplies background information for the following cycle of the speeches of Job and his friends. The pattern of the numerical saying was naturally used by the author when he set the stage for what follows. The use of the number is an unreflected one; it is simply the result of adding up the persons appearing in the Job drama. In this case the numerical saying lists a number of persons not related to each other by genealogical ties but only through the fact that they, and they alone, acted together in a given historical situation. The genre of the numerical saying serves in such cases to describe social groupings.

An example of the genre similar to the one just discussed is found in Dan. iii 23:

And these three men, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, fell bound into the burning fiery furnace.

Here the names of three men, who suffered together in a persecution, appear in the narrative tradition recounting their suffering, listed in the form of a numerical saying.

*Kings* and *nobles* are listed in the Old Testament in a similar fashion. The two kings of the Amorites, whom the Israelites overpowered

when they entered Palestine, stand out in this respect, as their listings in numerical sayings show (Josh. ix 9; cf. ii 10 f. and xxiv 12):

For we have heard . . . all that he did to the two kings of the Amorites who were beyond the Jordan, Sihon the king of Heshbon, and Og king of Basan, . . .

The two princes of Midian, Oreb and Zeeb, are mentioned in a similar fashion in Judg. vii 25, and Judg. viii 12, 21 refer to their two nobler colleagues, Zebah and Zalmunna, as suffering a like fate. A passage listing the two kings who attacked Jerusalem in the Syro-Ephraimite War speaks of them in a contemptuous way (Is. vii 4). There are other numerical sayings which list kings: Gen. xiv 8 f. refer by name to the four and five kings of two coalitions; Josh. x 5 lists the five Amorite kings who fought together against Gibeon, and Josh. xiii 3 mentions the five Philistine rulers by naming their respective seats of government. Finally, Gen. xxv 13-16 should be mentioned. There the twelve princes of Ishmael are listed together as descendants of Ishmael, Abraham's son.

It is easy to find parallel texts referring to social groupings, especially with reference to royalty, in non-Biblical narrative literature. One example gleaned from the Greek historian Herodotus may suffice (i 184 f.): <sup>1)</sup>

Now among the many rulers of this city of Babylon . . . , who finished the building of the walls and the temples, there were two that were women. The first of these lived five generations earlier than the second, and her name was Semiramis . . . The second queen, whose name was Nitocris, was a wiser woman than the first . . .

In this case it is the fact that these two queens "finished the building of the walls and the temples" that groups them together.

2. Sam. xxiii 8-39 (= 1. Chron. xi 11-47) list the *heroes* of David in the form of an extended numerical saying. Verses 8-17 describe in anecdote form those deeds which distinguished David's "three mighty men", and verses 18-39 recount in a similar way, by including verses 8-17, the thirty-seven heroes of David. <sup>2)</sup> The Philistine counterpart to these hero-lists is found 2. Sam. xxi 15-22, where a numerical

<sup>1)</sup> Translation of A. D. GODLEY, *Herodotus*, vol. I (Cambridge, Mass. / London 1960), p. 229.

<sup>2)</sup> The number of names and the names themselves in 2. Sam. xxiii 8-39 do not agree in all respects with those given in 1. Chron. xi 11-47. This indicates the variability of such lists. However, "the number was maintained at thirty, and vacancies were filled as they occurred". George B. CAIRD, *I.B.* II, p. 1171.

saying describes in four anecdotes the events that led to the death of the four Philistine "descendants of the giants in Gath".

A social grouping which is related to the system of the twelve tribes of Israel appears in the numerical sayings listing the twelve *disciples* of Jesus (Mk. iii 14-19; Mt. x 2-4; Lk. vi 13-16; cf. Acts i 13). The lists giving their names differ in regard to some of the names but in any case are, or pretend to be, a summary listing of those twelve men who were Jesus' disciples. From early Rabbinic traditions a similar list of disciples is known (Aboth ii 10 a):<sup>1)</sup>

Five disciples there were to Rabban Johanan b. Zaccai, and these are they: Rabbi Eliezer b. Hyrcanus, Rabbi Joshua b. Hananiah, Rabbi Jose the priest, Rabbi Simeon b. Nathaniel, and Rabbi Eleazar b. Arach . . .

The list is followed by a description of the virtues of each disciple. The introductory list in the form of a numerical saying serves to present the background information for their praise.

Finally, mention should be made of the story which relates that upon King Zimri's death a faction arose among his followers (1. Kings xvi 21):

Then the people of Israel were divided into two parts; half of the people followed Tibni the son of Ginath, to make him king, and half followed Omri.

In a given historical situation two *parties* come into being and are naturally listed in the form of a numerical saying. In this way both are characterized with reference to their common historical background. Odyssey viii 506-9 describe in a similar fashion the three different opinions held by differing groups of Trojans concerning Odysseus' wooden horse: One group wished to destroy it with the sword, another wanted to throw it down a precipice, but a third group wished to pull it into the city.

#### GEOGRAPHICAL GROUPINGS

Not only names of persons can be grouped together in numerical sayings but also those of *cities*. Examples of this usage of the pattern are found among the city lists in Josh. xv, xix, and xxi. Frequently the names of cities assigned to a tribe or tribal group are listed in this manner (Josh. xv 61 f.):

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<sup>1)</sup> Translation of R. Travers HERFORD, *A.P.O.T.* II, p. 696.

In the wilderness (scil. belonged to the tribe of Judah), Beth-arabah, Middin, Secacah, Nibshan, the City of Salt, and Engedi: six cities with their villages.

Many listings of cities are given in this fashion, the numerical value following the list. The problem of origin and function of these lists cannot be discussed in this connection; suffice it to say that they refer, as they now stand, to cities either actually held by a certain group at a certain time or claimed by that group. This also explains double countings of cities (cf. Josh. xix 1-9 with xv 21-32) and inaccurate numerical totals (e.g. Josh.. xix 2-6 and 7).

Even though Josh. xiii-xxi are a collection of lists, they here appear as part of the larger literary composition of the Deuteronomistic History of Israel (Deut.-2. Kings) and supply extensive background information for the events related at the end of the Book of Joshua, i.e. the religious and political establishment of the Israelite tribes in Palestine.

There occur altogether some twenty numerical sayings listing various numbers of cities in this manner, almost all of them in Josh. xv and xxi. Another example is found in 1. Chron. iv 32. Mention should also be made of the list of thirty-one defeated kings in Josh. xii 7-24, already discussed above, because these kings are not listed by their proper names but by the name of their chief cities.

Examples from non-Biblical literature indicate that numerical sayings occur elsewhere within epic contexts in the same function. Iliad iv 51 f. lists the three cities which the goddess Hera likes most:

Three cities I like most:  
Argos, Sparta, and spacious Mykene.

In a similar fashion Iliad ix 149-52 records the seven cities which King Agamemnon promises to Achilles among the bridal presents to be given to him.

## CHAPTER THREE

### REFLECTIVE NUMERICAL SAYINGS

In all periods of history the human mind has observed the world and has tried to understand it. Understanding, in turn, is the attempt to discover an order thought to be inherent in the phenomena observed. Once such an inherent order has been found and fixed in one way or another, new knowledge has been gained. On its basis further reflection and observation can yield new insights. It does not matter much whether the observed phenomena pertain to every-day life or to philosophical meditation, whether they are concerned with seemingly insignificant matters or with the basic questions of human existence. What matters is the fact that the question 'WHY?' is asked and an answer for it sought. Wherever and whenever this question rises and is not shunned, the human mind exercises its inborn desire to 'master' world and life and the different ways in which they manifest themselves.

One of the first steps in this process of understanding is the recognition of analogous features. Phenomena which exhibit similar or analogous characteristics are set side by side. In this way the human mind strives to discover the order underlying these phenomena and to group them together according to aspects common to all of them. Hence adding and numbering such phenomena is one of the first results of reflection of this kind. In the words of CURTIUS, "counting, enumerating, and numbering are means which thinking reflection employs to orient itself".<sup>1)</sup> In turn, inability to count or enumerate phenomena of a given nature is considered identical with not understanding their inner order. One of the questions put to Job in order to demonstrate to him his ignorance uses this very argument (Job xxxviii 37 a):

Who can number the clouds by wisdom?

The expected answer is that nobody can do this because it is beyond human power to do so. Hence it can be said in another context that that which man cannot number is 'unsearchable' and cannot be understood (Job v 9; cf. Ps. lxxi 15 c):

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<sup>1)</sup> E. R. CURTIUS, *Europäische Literatur und lateinisches Mittelalter* (Bern 1948), pp. 501-4.

... who (scil. God) does great things and unsearchable, marvelous things without number.

Passages of this nature do of course not imply that the Old Testament does not contain texts which owe their existence to the attempt to understand, through counting and grouping together, the order and structure of various phenomena of life and world. On the contrary, with regard to almost all fields of human knowledge the people of the Old Testament have searched for an order inherent in the phenomena encountered. The genre of the numerical saying is one of the foremost oral and literary patterns employed in order to fix the results of such reflection. With reference to the collection of such reflective numerical sayings in Prov. xxx 15-31, VON RAD has this to say: "... these are first attempts to order together enigmatic nature phenomena. . . when like is put side by side with like, much is already gained, because then these phenomena lose their absolutely enigmatic character which they had when they were considered in isolation. Yet precisely this is wisdom: the desire for a penetrating rational enlightenment and ordering of the world in which man finds himself, the will to discover and to fix orders of the phenomena of human life as well as of nature".<sup>1)</sup>

It is rewarding to search the Old Testament in the light of this argument for texts which illustrate the desire of the human mind to understand its world. Many relevant texts occur in the form of numerical sayings, because this pattern offers itself as a convenient form to express and to fix for the future the newly discovered order. The list can accommodate any number of analogous items, while the title-line not only describes the characteristic feature but also indicates, through the numerical value, the extent to which the order is considered valid.

A survey of Old Testament numerical sayings which were framed as the result of human reflection indicates that such reflection was neither limited to one field of human knowledge nor to one period of the history of Israel. It is also clear that one cannot hope for advance of human knowledge in intellectually stagnant periods or surroundings. In some cases the time of origin of particular numerical sayings can be ascertained, in other cases this is not possible. The main concern in the following discussion, at any rate, is to show the readiness and effectiveness with which the genre of the numerical saying was em-

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<sup>1)</sup> Gerhard von RAD, *Theologie des Alten Testaments I* (München 1957), pp. 422 f., also SAUER, *op. cit.*, pp. 24 f.

ployed for the purpose of formulating the result of reflection. For this reason it has been found convenient to discuss the sayings as arranged according to the area of their interest and content matter.

#### OBSERVATION OF NATURE

Animals have always claimed the attention of humans. Often they are enemies of man, and the observation of the behaviour patterns of the animal world is sheer necessity. In other instances animals are made to serve humanity: in this case also a thorough observation of animals is required. The numerical saying Prov. xxx 29-31 is the result of such observation: <sup>1)</sup>

Three there are which are stately in their stride,  
four which are stately in their tread:  
The lion, the ruler of the four-footed animals  
(and he does not turn back from anything),  
the rooster, lifting himself up over the hens,  
the he-goat, walking before the herd,  
and the mountain-goat, standing up in front of his people.

This graded numerical saying refers to the proud bearing of certain animals known to the author. Why are these four animals stately in their stride? The answer is that they are the first among their kind and as natural leaders do not have to be afraid of any other creature within their sphere of domination. It is evident that the numerical saying does not contain any moral or religious sentiment; <sup>2)</sup> it is simply the codification of an order in the world of *zoology* which has been discovered and fixed in the form of a numerical saying. To the modern biologist the grouping here achieved is of comparatively little scope and significance; what matters is the fact that an order was sought and found at all! In this lies the significance of that quaint Biblical passage.

Another numerical saying which embodies the results of animal observation, this time of a keener nature, occurs Prov. xxx 24-28:

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<sup>1)</sup> The Hebrew text is partly corrupt. The translation given above is based on the LXX, except for 31 b where, following a suggestion of Crawford H. Toy, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Proverbs* (New York 1904), p. 537, to the effect "that the original text referred to the majestic mien and movement of some animal", the original Hebrew is conjectured to have been *y' l qm l pny 'mw*, the *mlk* of M.T. being a corruption of *h'lk* which was connected with the description of the third animal (he-goat). Cf. SAUER, *op. cit.*, 110 f., for a different interpretation.

<sup>2)</sup> Toy, *op.cit.*, p. 535; von RAD, *op.cit.*, p. 422.

Four things on earth are small,  
 but they are exceedingly wise:  
 the ants are a people not strong,  
 yet they provide their food in the summer;  
 the badgers are a people not mighty,  
 yet they make their homes in the rocks;  
 the locusts have no king,  
 yet all of them march in rank;  
 the lizard you can take in your hands,  
 yet it is in kings' palaces.

This simple numerical saying is of even build. The title-line is not graded ('simple'), and each animal is described with reference firstly to its smallness and secondly to its wisdom. The measure of intelligence of these animals stands in an amazing contrast to their size. One would normally expect that the intelligence is directly proportionate to the animal's size: the greater, the wiser. The surprising discovery is that this is not necessarily so. Four little animals, which seem to be an exception in this respect, have been recognized and their names grouped together in a numerical saying. TOY's remarks deserve quotation: "The proverb is simply descriptive of the habits of the animals, a bit of natural history, without express reference to human life, but perhaps with the implied suggestion that success is not confined to bigness. <sup>1)</sup> It is indeed not unlikely that numerical sayings like this one were later preserved in oral tradition because a 'moral' could be derived from it. The original purpose in framing this numerical saying, however, was not primarily to teach a lesson but to formulate and so to fix an order of nature, newly discovered. The absence of any moral sentiment in the title-line and the similar character of the other numerical sayings found in Prov. xxx 15-31 speak for this, too.

Another numerical saying of that same collection extends the field of observation beyond zoology into the area of *general science* (Prov. xxx 18 f.):

Three things are too wonderful for me;  
 four I do not understand:  
 the way of an eagle in the sky,

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<sup>1)</sup> TOY, *op.cit.*, p. 534. Similarly SAUER, *op. cit.*, pp. 108-110, where it is also argued that this numerical saying is later because it presupposes a "beträchtliche systematisierende Denkleistung" and because the headline does not contain the numerical sequence  $x/x+1$  but only a simple numerical value. However, as our whole investigation will show, a simple "development" from graded to simple numerical saying cannot be defended.

the way of a serpent on a rock,  
 the way of a ship on the high seas,  
 and the way of a man with a maiden.

The title-line speaks of things 'too wonderful' for the reflecting person's mind, of matters which he does 'not understand'. This is a negative characterization in that it groups nature phenomena together not on account of a positive common feature but because they are all *beyond* human understanding. It is noteworthy that here the title-line alludes to that reflective mood which ultimately leads to the formulation of numerical sayings like this one. The attempt to understand phenomena which lie "at the border line of what can be grasped rationally" <sup>1)</sup> has not been successful; these phenomena remain enigmas. However, once they are grouped together as such, they have at least been categorized as that which lies beyond the limits of human perception, even if their inner order is hidden still. <sup>2)</sup> The use of the Hebrew root *pl'* in the title-line is instructive because this term refers in its various forms to matters which, for one reason or another, are beyond human understanding but nevertheless challenge the human mind (Ps. cxxxi 1; cf. Deut. xvii 8, xxx 11):

O LORD, my heart is not lifted up,  
 my eyes are not raised too high;  
 I do not occupy myself with things  
 too great and too marvelous for me.

This passage does not refer to the philosophical reflection that lies behind a text like Prov. xxx 18 f., but to a desire to break down those limitations which God has set for man's conduct. However, in Ps. cxxxi 1 a note is struck which could be understood as intended to cut off *any* reflection reaching beyond the limits of the human mind. This may be the reason why the bulk of Old Testament Wisdom Literature does not deal with problems such as were raised in the numerical sayings of the collection Prov. xxx 15-31, but rather with the ordering of human behaviour within the sphere of the Yahweh faith. ALT has suggested this when pointing out that texts related to nature wisdom are rare in the Old Testament. <sup>3)</sup>

The items listed in Prov. xxx 18 f. are grouped together not because they leave no trace behind when moving; "the point is rather the

<sup>1)</sup> VON RAD, *op.cit.*, p. 423. Cf. SAUER, *op.cit.*, pp. 106 f.

<sup>2)</sup> The Targum renders the Hebrew root *pl'* with a word of the root *gnz'*

<sup>3)</sup> A. ALT, 'Die Weisheit Salomos' (1951), *Kleine Schriften* II, p. 93.

wonderfulness of the things named".<sup>1)</sup> The marvelousness of human love which irresistibly drives the sexes to each other had also found an explanation in the tradition which the Yahwist used to form the opening of his pre-history of Israel (Gen. ii).<sup>2)</sup> Also the strange ability of the snake to advance over smooth rock, not having legs, had been explained by an etiological story used by the Yahwist in Gen. iii. The soaring flight of the eagle seemed to be an effortless gliding in the air with no apparent wing movement and thus called forth astonishment (cf. Job xxxix 26) and the desire to understand it. The path of a ship on the high seas was equally incomprehensible to the Israelites who, it must be remembered, never became seafarers. The confident affirmation that it is God's providence that steers a ship's course, "because thou hast given it a path in the sea, and a safe way through the waves" (Wisd. Sol. xiv 3) and the somewhat reserved reference to the ships that "go there" (Ps. civ 25 f.) echo ancient Israel's awe for seafaring.

The numerical sayings Prov. xxx 29-31, 24-28, and 18 f. originated in reflection on startling phenomena of nature. They fix an order newly discovered and so bear witness to the never ending quest of the human mind to understand and to master the world. Where and when in ancient Israel did this kind of reflection on nature phenomena rise? What is the setting in life of these beginnings of philosophy?

Several scholars<sup>3)</sup> have pointed out that the reference to King Solomon's encyclopaedic nature wisdom (1.Kings v 13 (R.S.V. iv 33)) may have some bearing on this problem:

He spoke of trees from the cedar that is in Lebanon to the hyssop that grows out of the wall; he spoke also of beasts, and of birds, and of reptiles, and of fish.

It is evident that this text speaks of encyclopaedic knowledge because the prepositions 'from' and 'to' are employed together and because the cedar was for the Israelites the tallest, the hyssop the smallest of all the trees, so that "the expression means all flora, from the greatest of the trees to the most humble shrub".<sup>4)</sup> The reference to animals

<sup>1)</sup> For the following cf. TOY, *op.cit.*, p. 531.

<sup>2)</sup> TOY, *loc.cit.*, explains the last item as referring to the procreation of a human being and points to Ps. cxxxix 13-16 and Eccles. xi 3.

<sup>3)</sup> E.g. ALT, *op.cit.*, pp. 90 f.; J. M. MYERS, 'Solomon', *I.D.B.* IV, p. 407. Cf. SAUER, *op.cit.*, p. 116, who cautiously says: "Möglicherweise ist in ihnen (scil. the numerical sayings of Prov. xxx) ein Rest der Sprüche zu sehen, die in Israel in salomonischer Zeit beliebt gewesen sein müssen" and refers to I Kings v 13 (R.S.V. iv 33).

<sup>4)</sup> J. C. TREVER, 'Hyssop', *I.D.B.* II, p. 670.

is similarly a comprehensive expression meaning 'fauna'. It is therefore not permissible to identify Solomon's nature wisdom with the bulk of the Old Testament Wisdom Literature which employs references to the flora and fauna only occasionally, nor with the genre of the fable which occurs in the Old Testament very rarely. ALT has suggested that these numerical sayings be interpreted in the light of ancient Near Eastern encyclopaedic knowledge codified in list-form, <sup>1)</sup> and the Egyptologist MORENZ, following ALT's suggestion, further argued that Hebrew nature wisdom mentioned in 1. Kings v 9-14, and actually found in Prov. xxx 15-31, is an Israelite development in that it borrowed material from ancient Egyptian onomastica and formed it into the short proverbial sayings of Prov. xxx 15-31. <sup>2)</sup>

On the other hand, SCOTT has questioned the historical reliability of 1. Kings v 9-14, and has "asserted unequivocally that this passage and its portrait of Solomon as the wisest of men and the author of encyclopaedic wisdom is late and largely imaginary". <sup>3)</sup> This assertion is based on a detailed examination of the vocabulary employed in the respective passages, hence any discussion of the problem must concern itself with this position. SCOTT attaches much weight to "literary and linguistic affinities of this material . . . with post-exilic, rather than pre-exilic writings". As far as the passage 1. Kings v 9-14 is concerned, not all of the five alleged affinities are convincing <sup>4)</sup> and, in any case, do not prove that the underlying *tradition* is fictitious. It is safe to assume with NOTH <sup>5)</sup> that 1. Kings v 9-14 contains an old tradition according to which King Solomon—and this includes his royal court and his whole era—invented and furthered encyclopaedic nature wisdom.

The scholars who refer to the numerical sayings of Prov. xxx 15-31 as illustrations of Solomon's encyclopaedic wisdom also mention Job xxxviii ff. as a similar form of nature wisdom. <sup>6)</sup> VON RAD has devoted

<sup>1)</sup> ALT, *op.cit.*, pp. 93 f.

<sup>2)</sup> Siegfried MORENZ, *Ägyptologie* (Leiden 1952), p. 198.

<sup>3)</sup> R. B. Y. SCOTT, 'Solomon and the Beginnings of Wisdom in Israel', *V.T.S.* III (1955), p. 272.

<sup>4)</sup> Cf. SCOTT, *op.cit.*, pp. 268 f. The noun *tbwnb* occurs in the (older) *pre-exilic* collections of the Book of Proverbs several times, and the verb *hkm* occurs four times in Ugaritic texts with exactly the meaning which SCOTT claims to be post-exilic. (C. H. GORDON, *Ugaritic Manual* (Rome 1955), p. 263, no. 628 of the glossary).

<sup>5)</sup> Martin NOTH, *Überlieferungsgeschichtliche Studien*, 2nd ed. (Tübingen 1957), p. 68.

<sup>6)</sup> ALT, *op.cit.*, p. 92.

a study to the relation between Job xxxviii f. and the Amenemope Onomasticon from ancient Egypt, <sup>1)</sup> in which he shows that the poet of Job xxxviii 12 ff. has 'used' some onomasticon similar to the Amenemope Onomasticon. The tabulation of items occurring in both texts, given in that study, clearly demonstrates this. <sup>2)</sup> However, as far as the numerical sayings of Prov. xxx 29-31, 24-28, and 18 f. are concerned, it is not possible to show a direct connection between them and any onomasticon-like 'Vorlage'. On the contrary, these numerical sayings make the impression of spontaneous creations. In that case the spirit of time and place must have been conducive to the kind of philosophical reflection standing behind the formulation of these sayings. The era of Solomon offers itself as that background against which philosophical reflection of this type can best be imagined. <sup>3)</sup> There is little doubt that the period of Solomon "was attended by an amazing cultural flowering," <sup>4)</sup> and in this way stimulated sages to reach out for new knowledge. It cannot be argued, however, that such beginnings of philosophy are limited to this one period in the history of Israel or, for that matter, to Israel only. It is possible that later philosophical observation of nature and life also led to the formulation of numerical sayings embodying the results of such reflection. The fact that this kind of 'research' covered various fields of knowledge substantiates this assumption. It is nevertheless true and understandable that in the later history of Israel religiously motivated reflection on all matters of life moved more and more into the foreground.

The observation of the *geography* of the earth is another field of knowledge treated in numerical sayings. Remarkable features such as rivers early became the object of observation and reflection. The result of an ancient categorization of the rivers of the world is found in the form of a numerical saying in Gen. ii 10-14:

A river flowed out of Eden to water the garden, and there it divided and became four rivers. The name of the first is Pishon . . . The name of the second river is Gihon . . . And the name of the third river is the Tigris . . . And the fourth river is the Euphrates.

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<sup>1)</sup> Gerhard von RAD, 'Hiob XXXVIII und die altägyptische Weisheit', *V.T.S.* III (1955), pp. 293-301.

<sup>2)</sup> *Op.cit.*, p. 295.

<sup>3)</sup> The reference to domestic fowl does not militate against this date (cf. Prov. xxx 31), because "two Hebrew seals from Palestine with the rooster depicted on them make the presence of the species a certainty in the first millenium B.C.". F. S. BODENHEIMER, 'Fauna', *I.D.B.* II, p. 253.

<sup>4)</sup> John BRIGHT, *A History of Israel* (Philadelphia 1959), p. 198.

This text is an independent unit, originally not connected with its present context. There can be no doubt concerning “the legendary-mythical nature of the material”<sup>1)</sup> and regarding the origin of this tradition in ancient Mesopotamia.<sup>2)</sup> While the identification of the first two rivers is difficult, it is clear that all four rivers are real and not mythical rivers. The number ‘four’ is probably connected with “an ancient picture of the four world rivers encircling the entire earth”.<sup>3)</sup> As the unit now stands, it represents “a very archaic world map”,<sup>4)</sup> drawn on the basis of the water supply of the ancient world.

The list describes the four great rivers known to the people of a certain time and place and categorizes them together, thus bringing to light a geographical order which had first to be observed and discovered. The title-line characterizes these rivers as overflow from the Garden of Eden, thereby adding a theological note, which in turn justifies the inclusion of this geographical tradition in the Yahwistic creation story.<sup>5)</sup> It is noteworthy that the numerical saying contains only circumstantial clauses, that is, the list describes an existing condition and not certain events of the past, as is the case in the narrative numerical sayings. The same is true of Prov. xxx 29-31, 24-28, and 18 f., which describe an existing order in the world of nature by employing circumstantial clauses. This feature distinguishes the reflective use of the pattern from its narrative use, because through the reflective use an order recognized as *existing* is fixed and codified. It matters little that in some cases preterite verb forms occur in the title-line, because this tense is in this case only employed in order to put the newly discovered order into a historical setting.

A text from the intertestamental period contains a similar geographical numerical saying in prose form within the setting of a grand apocalyptic vision (1. Enoch lxxvii 5-7):<sup>6)</sup>

I saw seven rivers on the earth larger than all the rivers: one of them coming from the west pours its waters into the Great Sea. And these two come from the north . . . And the remaining four come forth on the side of the north to their own sea, <two of them to> the Erythraean Sea, and two into the Great Sea . . .

<sup>1)</sup> B. S. CHILDS, ‘Eden, Garden of’, *I.D.B.* II, p. 23.

<sup>2)</sup> OTTO KAISER, *Die mythische Bedeutung des Meeres in Ägypten, Ugarit und Israel* (B.Z.A.W. 78; 1959), pp. 107-112.

<sup>3)</sup> CHILDS, *loc.cit.*; cf. U. CASSUTO, *A Commentary on the Book of Genesis*, I, transl. by I. ABRAHAMS (Jerusalem 1961), pp. 116 f.

<sup>4)</sup> GERHARD VON RAD, *Das erste Buch Mose - Genesis* (Göttingen 1953), p. 64.

<sup>5)</sup> See VON RAD, *loc.cit.*, for a discussion of this emphasis.

<sup>6)</sup> Translation of R. H. CHARLES, *A.P.O.T.* II, p. 243.

The dreamlike description of the seven rivers and the importance of the number 'seven' in this part of 1. Enoch renders it doubtful whether its author based his description on real geographical knowledge current in his time. If he did, this text indicates that among certain people it was held that there are seven rivers 'on the earth'.

Geographical observation and reflection are also found outside the Old Testament. The complicated subject of the Nile inundation could be mentioned in this connection (Herodotus i 20-23), or the manner in which the Greeks, according to the same historian, divided the earth into three parts (ii 16):<sup>1)</sup>

... the Ionians ... and the rest of the Greeks ... divide the whole earth into three parts, Europe, Asia, and Libya; they must add to these yet a fourth part, the Delta of Egypt, ...

This prose numerical saying is instructive because it demonstrates how new observations could necessitate the change of the formulation of already existing knowledge. The text further illustrates how limited geographical knowledge was at that time, and how slowly 'advance' could be made.

Another field of knowledge treated in numerical sayings was *meteorology*, e.g. the observation of the different winds. 1. Enoch lxxvi 1-14 (cf. xxxiv-xxxvi) groups together the winds according to the twelve portals from which they are thought to proceed:<sup>2)</sup>

And at the ends of the earth I saw twelve portals ... , from which the winds go forth and blow over the earth. Three of them are open on the face (i.e. the east) of the heavens, and three in the west, and three on the right (i.e. the south) of the heaven, and three on the left (i.e. the north).

Through four of these come winds of blessing and prosperity, and from those eight come hurtful winds, ... (follows a detailed description of these winds)

The lengthy and complicated listing includes winds that bring rain and dew, heat and cold, locusts and desolation, hoar-frost and snow. The description is concluded as follows (lxxvi 14):

And the twelve portals of the four quarters of the heaven are therewith completed, and all their laws and all their plagues and all their benefactions have I shown to thee, ...

<sup>1)</sup> Translation of A. D. GODLEY, *Herodotus*, vol. I (Cambridge, Mass./London 1960), p. 293.

<sup>2)</sup> Translation of R. H. CHARLES, *A.P.O.T.* II, p. 242.

Most of this material must have been based on actual meteorological knowledge available at the time of the apocalyptic seers of the inter-testamental period, because these men were the collectors of cultural-historical, astronomical, meteorological, and geographical materials. <sup>1)</sup> On the other hand, apocalyptic 'scholars' presented their knowledge as having been 'shown to them', thereby indicating that these materials and their inner order are not self-evident but clear only to those to whom understanding has been granted.

Similar groupings of winds are found in the Babylonian creation epic *Enūma eliš* iv 45-47 (cf. 42 f.), where seven winds are listed in an inverted numerical saying: <sup>2)</sup>

He brought forth Imhullu "the Evil Wind",  
 the Whirlwind, the Hurricane,  
 The Fourfold Wind, the Sevenfold Wind,  
 the Cyclone, the Matchless Wind;  
 Then he sent forth the winds he had brought forth,  
 the seven of them.

It is curious that two types of winds of those listed are again subdivided into numerical groupings of 'fourfold' and 'sevenfold' winds. The passage iv 42 f., immediately preceding and listing South, North, East, and West Wind, may be intended as explication of the term 'fourfold wind'.

Nature observation was not always confined to phenomena which are grouped together in modern science. The numerical saying Prov. xxx 15 b - 16 <sup>3)</sup> shows that reflection covered *nature phenomena at large* as well:

Three things are never satisfied;  
 four never say, "Enough":  
 Sheol, the barren womb,  
 the earth ever thirsty for water,  
 and the fire which never says, "Enough".

<sup>1)</sup> Gerhard von RAD, *Theologie des Alten Testaments* II, p. 319.

<sup>2)</sup> Translation of E. A. SPEISER, *A.N.E.T.*, p. 66.

<sup>3)</sup> Prov. xxx 15 a is a separate unit and connected with the following text only by thought association ('insatiability'). SAUER, *op. cit.*, p. 104 f. directly connects 15 a with the following. The numerical saying thus created is so irregular in structure and content that his suggestion presents difficulties. As the noun *'lwqb* refers to the leech (cf. F. S. BODENHEIMER, 'Fauna', *I.D.B.* II, p. 256) and its two 'daughters' to the two suckers, the little unit, possibly not complete as it now stands, represents the results of nature observation, very much like the other units of the collection Prov. xxx 15-31.

This graded numerical saying groups together every-day life phenomena with respect to their insatiability. <sup>1)</sup> It is unusual that the first two items are described only by one word or one phrase respectively, while the last two receive a fuller characterization. <sup>2)</sup> Scholars have noted parallel texts in other cultures; cf. e.g. the ancient Indian proverb: <sup>3)</sup>

Fire is not sated with wood,  
nor the ocean with the streams,  
nor death with all the living,  
nor the beauty-eyed with men.

While this text lacks a title-line, a comparable Arabic numerical saying with title-line is known: <sup>4)</sup>

Tria tribus non satiantur:  
Vulva pene, lignum igne, terra pluvia.

Further parallels could undoubtedly be collected from other cultures, because the observations which are here made are characteristic of all human life.

As for Prov. xxx 15 b - 16, Hab. ii 5 illustrates that 'Sheol' is another term for 'death' in this passage. In the light of the terror which death and the underworld exerted on the living (cf. e.g. Eccles. ix 4 and Ps. lxxxviii 10-12), the listing of the insatiability of death in the numerical saying strikes the reader as a somewhat detached one, almost scholarly cool. However, one must remember the parallels from other cultures in order to understand that such observations can lead to similar formulations almost everywhere. The second phenomenon listed is the sterile womb. Gen. xvi 2 and xxx 1 may serve as commentaries. The wife who had no children was without her proper honour and not rarely divorced or otherwise degraded on account of her plight. Her desire for sexual intercourse as a means to change her predicament

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<sup>1)</sup> The word *hwn*, marked as obscure in the *R.V.S.*, means 'power, wealth' and is used here in the sense of 'enough', see *K.B.*, *sub voce*.

<sup>2)</sup> TOY, *op. cit.*, p. 529, proposes to expand this part of the numerical saying to: "Sheol is never satisfied with dead, the barren womb never sated with children."

<sup>3)</sup> Translation of FRANZ DELITZSCH, *Biblical Commentary on the Proverbs of Solomon*, vol. II, transl. by M. G. EASTON (Edinburgh 1875), p. 290.

<sup>4)</sup> According to DELITZSCH, *loc. cit.*, who in turn quotes G. W. FREYTAG, ed., *Arabum Proverba*, vol. III (Bonn 1834), p. 61 (no. 347). SAUER, *op. cit.*, p. 106, footnote 89, also refers to this Arabic proverb and argues that it is derived from the Hebrew proverb. But as the Indian proverb quoted above shows, the insatiability of fire, death, or the barren womb, leads to such groupings at different times and independently of each other.

and to become a mother is aptly described as insatiable.<sup>1)</sup> That the surface of the earth is never sated with water can be readily observed almost any time and anywhere and needs no further comment. The insatiability of fire has in the Old Testament become practically proverbial, cf. e.g. Is. v 24; Deut. iv 24, and Prov. xxvi 20.

One can hardly claim that deep philosophical reasoning is necessary for the formulation of this numerical saying. However, the spirit in which these observations were made is important, because here nature phenomena are taken for what they are, and an attempt is made to categorize them. The parallels from other cultures show that similar observations led to similar formulations elsewhere. From this it can be concluded that such groupings in numerical sayings (or certain other types of lists) come into being whenever and wherever nature phenomena are observed with the desire to understand their inner order and functioning.

An instructive numerical saying in a prose setting, categorizing three phenomena of life which are understood only by God, is found 4. Ezra (II Esdras) iv 1-5:<sup>2)</sup>

... Uriel ... answered and said to me: "... do you think you can comprehend the way of the Most High?" Then I said, "Yes, my lord." And he replied to me, "I have been sent to show you three ways, and to put before you three problems ...". And he said to me, "Go, weigh for me the weight of fire, or measure for me a measure of wind, or call back for me the day that is past."

The apocalyptic seer is compelled to confess his inability to solve these 'problems'. Then his answer is used to demonstrate to him man's inability to "comprehend the way of the Most High" (cf. iv 11). The term 'comprehend' is significant because it shows how comprehension of the inner order of things is that which man seeks and does not always find.

The Old Testament did not expressly discourage such human reflection, but in fact cut it short by its insistence that God alone is all-knowing. Therefore it does not befit man to reach out for his own understanding of world, nature, and life, apart from God. Yahweh sees everything (Job xxviii 24), especially the human heart (1. Kings viii 39; Prov. xv 11). He only has understanding (Is. xl 28). This

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<sup>1)</sup> The phrase does not refer to the sexual urge as such, as some commentators have argued, because the root *ʿgr* contains the notion of restraint, see *K.B.*, *sub voce*.

<sup>2)</sup> According to the *R.S.V.* translation.

understanding is unsearchable for man. In fact, Deutero-Isaiah asserts that only God is able to understand the order of the world, his creation (Is. xl 12-14). God's thoughts are not men's thoughts (Is. lv 8)! Not what man searches out is truth, but what God declares, that is right and truth (Is. xlv 19). Those who would have it otherwise, "turn things upside down" (Is. xxix 16; cf. xlv 9 f.). In the light of God's all-understanding and the limits it sets *eo ipso* to the human quest for world understanding, it is not surprising that Old Testament texts originating in such a 'scientific quest' are rare. The reflective numerical sayings discussed so far may legitimately be considered as evidence that such a quest was not absent from the history of early Israel, even though it is quite rudimentary in what it has left behind.

A comparison of the numerical sayings under consideration with Ps. civ on the one hand and Gen. i 1 - ii 4 a on the other, may further clarify the peculiar character of these numerical sayings. Ps. civ, one of the younger hymns of the psalter, differs from the numerical sayings discussed in several respects, even though both texts deal with nature phenomena. Both authors observe nature closely but interpret this observation in a different manner. While the numerical sayings look at nature and world from man's point of view and state the results of such observation objectively, Ps. civ refers to nature from the believer's point of view and is thus characterized by a note of joy. It is quite possible that the composer of Ps. civ made use of already codified nature observation, but his basic attitude is different from that of the reflecting nature observer. The Priestly account, on the other hand, illustrates how later theological reflection described the order of the world in terms of God's creating it. The concept of the universe evident in this account is that of ancient Mesopotamia. As such it is the formulation of ancient Babylonian nature wisdom with its mythological background. The Priestly writer, however, made this Babylonian nature wisdom subservient to his own theological outlook by relating it to the creative word of God. Thus 'scientific' observation of the universe stands no more in itself but has been taken up into theology, in this case a theology of theological reflection, in the case of Ps. civ into a theology of praise.

Fuller developments of early human reflection into philosophical systems took place in ancient Greece and ancient India. Especially the beginnings of Greek philosophy may be compared with similar beginnings in ancient Israel. The first 'principle' of the universe was the philosophical reflection of pre-Socratic thinkers. The categorizat-

ion of the four elements by Empedocles (born circa 494 B.C.) is a good example (Book i 33): <sup>1)</sup>

Hear first the four roots of all things: bright Zeus, life-giving Hera (air), and Aidoneus (earth), and Nestis, who moistens the springs of men with her tears.

There can be no doubt that the results of such early philosophical reflection, expressed in a prose numerical saying, are the first groping steps in the history of the philosophy of Classical Greece. The grouping of the four elements exerted influence for a considerable period in the ancient world. <sup>2)</sup> It did not remain the only summary of 'first principles', as a passage from Aristotle's *Metaphysics* (i 5) with reference to the Pythagoreans indicates: <sup>3)</sup>

A different party in this same school say that the first principles are ten, named according to the following table: finite and infinite, even and odd, one and many, right and left, male and female, rest and motion, straight and crooked, light and darkness, good and bad, square and oblong.

This grouping of first principles is 'advanced' in comparison to the one ascribed to Empedocles. Change is only to be expected in this field; stagnation would spell death. The eventual abandonment of the pattern of the numerical saying in this type of philosophical reasoning is not surprising. It must not be overlooked, however, that numerical sayings did serve to formulate in a convenient and sometimes classical manner an order discovered in nature or world.

The Upanishads, Sanskrit philosophical treatises and part of the Vedas, contain many numerical sayings which categorize various orders of the universe and of life, gained in philosophical reflection. One example may illustrate this (Chāndogya Upanishad 6:3, 1): <sup>4)</sup>

Now of these beings here there are just three origins: [there are beings] born from an egg, born from a living thing, born from a sprout.

This classification of three manners of origins is clearly the outcome of philosophical meditation. Different in content from comparable Greek and Hebrew numerical sayings, it breathes their spirit, a spirit

<sup>1)</sup> Translation given by T.V. SMITH, ed., *From Thales to Plato*, 2nd ed. (Chicago 1956), p. 28.

<sup>2)</sup> See Robert H. PFEIFFER, *History of New Testament Times* (London 1949), p. 139 footnote, for a discussion of this influence in Biblical Literature.

<sup>3)</sup> Translation given by SMITH, *op. cit.*, p. 53.

<sup>4)</sup> Translation of Robert Ernest HUME, *The Thirteen Principal Upanishads*, 2nd ed. (London/Madras 1931/49), p. 241.

of the human quest for understanding the world. Hence it represents, in the words of HUME, "the earnest efforts of the profound thinkers of early India to solve the problems of the origin, the nature, and the destiny of man and of the universe".<sup>1)</sup> The many numerical sayings found in the Upanishads alone prove that also in early Indian philosophy this genre served to formulate the results of philosophical reflection, in a way similar to early Greek philosophy and the Old Testament nature wisdom.

This discussion may be concluded with two numerical sayings found in Pirqe Aboth. This Mishnah tractate is one of the oldest parts of the Talmud and is in many respects similar to Biblical and intertestamental wisdom literature. Also, Jewish theologians pondered in philosophic fashion the first principles of the world, but did so on the basis of their faith. The result of their reflection was formulated in the form of a numerical saying, attributed to a rabbi of the last centuries before the Christian era (Pirqe Aboth i 2):<sup>2)</sup>

Simeon the Just . . . used to say:  
On three things the world standeth:  
on the Torah,  
and on the Service,  
and on doing of kindnesses.

According to HERFORD, "the three things represent revelation, worship, and sympathy, i.e. God's word to man, man's response to God, and man's love for his fellowmen".<sup>3)</sup> For Jewish theologians the legitimate human quest for an understanding of the order of world and universe has indeed found its answer. However, this answer rises not out of the discovery through the strength of human reflection pure and simple, but out of a meditation on the sum of God's revelation, i.e. Holy Writ.

A rabbi of the first century of the Christian era came to a slightly different conclusion (Pirqe Aboth i 18):<sup>4)</sup>

Rabban Simeon b. Gamaliel said:  
On three things the world stands:  
on judgement, on truth, and on peace.

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<sup>1)</sup> HUME, *op. cit.*, p. vii.

<sup>2)</sup> Translation of R. TRAVERS HERFORD, *A.P.O.T.* II, p. 691.

<sup>3)</sup> Footnote to i 2, *ibid.*

<sup>4)</sup> Translation of HERFORD, *op. cit.*, p. 694. In a footnote the translator argues against other scholars who attribute this saying to a rabbi of the second century of the Christian era.

The grouping is more general than that of the other Rabbinic numerical saying, but in essence both set forth the same theological answer to the human quest for understanding the basic 'principles' of the world: The answer cannot be reached by man, but can only be received from God through revelation. Or, as the Qumran covenanters affirmed in one of their hymns (1 QH i 9): <sup>1)</sup>

By Thy wisdom [all things exist from] eternity,  
and before creating them Thou knewest their works for ever and ever.  
... and nothing is known unless Thou desire it.

#### OBSERVATION OF SOCIETY

Man lives in society. Other human beings influence his life, just as he, in turn, influences the life of others. Human life and society belong together. It is not surprising that man wishes to discover the structure of the society in which he lives. Once this order is known, many events of his life can be understood or foreseen and so lose the character of uncertainty which they would have otherwise. The conditions which affect social life may vary from culture to culture, but in all of them man desires to comprehend the orders underlying society.

The collection of numerical sayings Prov. xxx 15-31 contains a text which is the outcome of such reflection on the order of society. The numerical saying Prov. xxx 21-23 groups together four unbearable *social phenomena*: <sup>2)</sup>

Under three things the earth trembles,  
four it cannot bear:  
a slave when he becomes king,  
and a fool when he is filled with food;  
an unloved woman when she gets a husband,  
and a maid when she succeeds her mistress.

This graded numerical saying describes certain changes within the established order of Israel's society and characterizes them as upsetting this very order. The verb *rgz* 'tremble' in connection with the word 'land' commonly refers to earthquakes (cf. 1. Sam. xiv 15; Am. viii 8; Ps. lxxvii 19). The parallel verse 21 b shows, however, that here this expression is to be understood metaphorically. The title-line stresses

<sup>1)</sup> Translation of G. VERMES, *The Dead Sea Scrolls in English* (Pelican Book 1962), p. 150.

<sup>2)</sup> Delete the second 'under' (21 b) with the LXX and the Vulgate, on account of the unusual Hebrew construction, as dittography. So also B. GEMSNER, *Sprüche Salomos* (Tübingen 1937), p. 82, and SAUER, *op. cit.*, p. 107, footnote 99.

that it is altogether unacceptable if members of the four strata of society enter positions which are the outright opposite to their normal position. As one commentator puts it, "the earth stands in a most vivid relationship with humanity; if horrors happen upon her, she cannot sustain it; if events occur which are altogether against her nature, . . . her eternal foundations totter".<sup>1)</sup>

In the list of the numerical saying a chiasitic arrangement can be observed: the slave (22 a) corresponds to the female slave (23 b), and the fool (22 b) to the unloved wife (23 a). The slave is here seen as a man who does not hold power over himself but is at the disposal of his master. This relationship defines his position in society. If he becomes king, he has placed himself at the exact opposite of his former position; he is then not only master, but master of masters. This reference presupposes the institution of slavery, which was in the ancient world indeed one of the basic social orders, commonly thought to disappear only in death (cf. Job iii 19 and Is. xxiv 2).

The succession of a female slave to her mistress' place corresponds to 22 a. The Hebrew noun here employed is one of the common terms for 'female slave'. In the summary phrase 'male and female servants' (Gen. xii 16; xx 14; xxx 43; Deut. xxviii 68) it is coordinated with the term for male slave used in 22 a. Hence there can be little doubt that 22 a and 23 b refer to analogous cases. The interpretation of 23 b has been a point of scholarly dispute. In the light of Gen. xvi 4 and ancient Near Eastern parallels<sup>2)</sup> it is probable that this line refers to a female slave taking her mistress' position through a change in the husband's marital affection, a change usually evidenced by a resulting pregnancy.

Just as 22 a and 23 b refer to two social groups, so 22 b and 23 a refer to two analogous social strata. The fool is not so much a man void of understanding as a kind of outcast; one who had put himself outside society and did no more participate in family and tribal life. He now existed at the outskirts of human society (cf. Job xxx 1-8; 2. Sam. iii 33 f.).<sup>3)</sup> If such a person 'had enough to eat', he in fact

<sup>1)</sup> W. FRANKENBERG, *Die Sprüche* (Göttingen 1898), p. 163. SAUER, *op. cit.*, p. 108, says that „viele Worte und Wortstämme dieser Verse (scil. Prov. xxx 21-23) sind aus dem Ugaritischen bekannt" (footnote 103) and also refers to an episode in the Baal cycle which recounts how a subordinate god 'Aṭtar was made king for a short time after Baal's death.

<sup>2)</sup> § 26 of the Sumerian Lipit-Ishtar Code (*A.N.E.T.*, p. 160) and § 146 of the Code of Hammurabi (*A.N.E.T.*, p. 172); cf. also C. H. GORDON, *Introduction to Old Testament Times* (Ventnor, N. J. 1953), p. 102.

<sup>3)</sup> For a detailed discussion of this meaning cf. Wolfgang M. W. ROTH, 'NBL', *V.T. X* (1960), pp. 401-404.

enjoyed the privileges of the free and God-fearing Israelite (cf. Prov. xii 11 a (=xxviii 19 a); xx 13; Jer. xlv 17). The phrase 'unloved woman', on the other hand, was a legal term and referred to the disliked wife who could not be divorced by her husband (cf. Deut. xxi 15-17; Gen. xxix 31, 33; Eccclus. vii 26). The 'hated' wife remained in her husband's house but her life was similar to that of a female slave. Hence she was practically for ever barred from getting a husband, that is, enjoying a full and honourable marital status (cf. Is. lxiii 4).

This discussion of Prov. xxx 21-23 has shown that the four items listed refer to four strata of society which must never change their positions. If they nevertheless do, the very foundations of the earth shake. Therefore this numerical saying codifies a social order which was discovered by a reflection of the cases here mentioned. Once fixed and codified, this formulation could in turn serve to stabilize social life by designating any change within that social set-up as 'earth-shaking'.

A numerical saying from Classical Greece may serve for comparison: <sup>1)</sup>

Hermipp applies in his biographies to Thales the story, which is told by some people of Socrates, namely, that he used to say:  
 For these three things I am grateful to Fate:  
 First, that I am born a human being and not an animal,  
 second, that (I am born) a man and not a woman,  
 third, that (I am born) a Greek and not a Barbarian.

Tradition is not certain as to the author of this numerical saying. The text, in any case, aptly groups together those social positions which alone seemed acceptable to the ancient Greeks. Phrasing and codification in this form presuppose the reflection of the Greek mind on society. It should be noted that each new description presupposes the preceding one, the first line of the list selecting human beings from all that lives excluding the animals, the second line selecting from humans only the males excluding the females, and the third again choosing from among all men Greek men, excluding the non-Greeks. Society was apparently understood to be structured concentrically, the free Greek man standing in the centre. Different as this understanding of society may be from that underlying the numerical saying Prov. xxx 21-23, they both were born out of the observation of human society.

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<sup>1)</sup> Diogenes LAERTIOS i 33, quoted according to BRUNO SNELL, *Leben und Meinungen der sieben Weisen*, 3rd ed. (München 1952), p. 86.

It is not surprising that a parallel from ancient India can be cited. In one of the late hymns of the Rigveda the order of the four castes of Indian society is explained in this manner (Purusha-sūkta 11 f.): <sup>1)</sup>

When they divided the Purusha, into how many parts did they arrange him? . . . The Brahmin was his mouth, the two arms were made the Rājanya (warrior), his two thighs the Vaisya (trader and agriculturalist), from his feet the Sūdra (servile class) were born.

The basic order of ancient Hindu society is here explained with reference to its alleged origin: the four classes sprang from Purusha, a primeval man-principle as described in this hymn. At the time when this text was composed, the four caste system existed already. This passage, in form related to the numerical saying, is the outcome of reflection on the origin and structure of the four caste system. Even though the explanation is mythological, it attempts to formulate the principle of an existing social order.

Quite a different note is struck by a text from ancient Egypt, dating from the Middle Kingdom, "a period in which social justice and the rights of the common man were emphasized". <sup>2)</sup> The pattern of the numerical saying is employed in order to state, through a decree voiced by the creator-god himself, that all men are equal in opportunity: <sup>3)</sup>

. . . I did four good deeds within the portal of the horizon. I made the four winds that every man might breathe thereof . . .

I made the great inundation that the poor man might have rights therein like the great man: I made every man like his fellow. I did not command that they do evil, (but) it was their hearts which violated what I said. I made their hearts to cease from forgetting the West, . . .

This text refers to the beginning of the world <sup>4)</sup> and asserts that the creator-god has created all men equal. Wind (air) and water (Nile inundation) are equally available to all. In fact, the god himself created an equalitarian society but man in disobedience brought in inequality. The text was "a valid sublimation of the highest aspirations of the time". <sup>5)</sup> The reference to the West as the land of the dead sets forth

<sup>1)</sup> Translation quoted by LIN YUTANG, ed., *The Wisdom of India* (Bombay 1956), p. 29.

<sup>2)</sup> John A. WILSON, *A.N.E.T.*, p. 7 d.

<sup>3)</sup> Translation of WILSON, *op. cit.*, pp. 7 f. The text is one of the Coffin Texts (circa 2000 B.C.), entitled "All Men Created Equal in Opportunity".

<sup>4)</sup> WILSON, *op. cit.*, p. 7, footnote 3. For the following see the discussion by WILSON, in *H. and H. A. Frankfort et al.*, *The Intellectual Adventure of Ancient Man* (Chicago 1946), pp. 106-8.

<sup>5)</sup> WILSON, *op. cit.*, p. 107.

the same thought: In contrast to the concept of an earlier period, a distinction between man and man shall not even exist in death. It is noteworthy that this portrayal of society is cast into the form of the numerical saying. (It is the oldest extant example of the pattern of the numerical saying.)

It is significant that Prov. xxx 21-23 is the only Old Testament reflective numerical saying resulting from the observation of society which does not contain a religious sentiment. Other comparable numerical sayings of the Old Testament view the order of society as related directly or indirectly to God (Prov. xxii 2; cf. xxix 13):<sup>1</sup>)

The rich and the poor meet together;  
The LORD is the maker of them both.

This inverted numerical saying groups together the two basic strata of a society of more urban character as both equally created by God. The point made is that these social classes exist by the will of the creator and so are both relative entities (cf. Prov. xxix 13; Job xxxiv 19). The religious tone, missing in Prov. xxx 21-23, is present in this numerical saying, thereby illustrating that the faith of the Old Testament, eminently concerned with interhuman relationships, soon impressed its outlook on this aspect of Israel's thought. It is not surprising that the sages of Israel were especially eager to group together certain types of offenders in the social sphere. The listing of Prov. xxx 11-14 illustrates this: <sup>2</sup>)

(There are three kinds of men whom the LORD hates,  
And four that are abhorrent to him:)  
There are those who curse their fathers  
and do not bless their mothers.  
There are those who are pure in their own eyes  
but are not cleansed of their filth.  
There are those—how lofty are their eyes,  
how high their eyelids lift!  
There are those whose teeth are swords,  
whose teeth are knives . . .

The reference to those who think themselves pure, but are in reality not cleansed, calls to mind similar prophetic condemnations (Is. i 15-

<sup>1</sup>) Read with the LXX 'both' instead of *M.T.* 'all'.

<sup>2</sup>) The missing title-line is supplied as suggested by Charles Foster KENT and Millar BURROWS, *Proverbs and Didactic Poems* (New York 1927), p. 109. The last couplet of the composition (14 b) is an interpretative gloss and is here left out, so also TOY, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Proverbs* (New York 1904), pp. 526 f. Cf. also SAUER, *op. cit.*, pp. 103 f.

17; cf. Am. v 21-24). Haughty looks are censored e.g. by Isaiah (iii 16 f.; cf. 12 and 17). "The four classes are the unfilial, the self-righteous, the arrogant, and the rapacious." <sup>1)</sup> Also in this numerical saying either circumstantial clauses or relative clauses with a present/future verb-form stress the fact that an existing social order is described. This social order, however, is branded as non-pleasing to God and so presented as a warning to all concerned. In this a didactic element is obviously present. Such a didactic function is dependent on the subject matter treated: the more a numerical saying deals with social orders *sub specie Dei*, the more will it assume a normative function. However, the didactic element is not primary in such cases. The Old Testament also contains numerical sayings which have primarily a didactic function, for instance the Ten Commandments. This didactic or hortative use will be discussed in a separate chapter of this enquiry. However, it must be stressed that there are many cases where both the reflective and the hortative usages of the genre of the numerical saying are found in one and the same numerical saying. In such cases the primary use, whether reflective or hortative, determines for the purposes of the present study whether the numerical saying under consideration is assigned to the one or the other group.

Ecclusiasticus contains seven numerical sayings grouping together undesirable or desirable social phenomena. They are pervaded by the theological concept of wisdom characteristic of that book. All describe existing social phenomena with circumstantial clauses and / or present-future verb-forms. Five numerical sayings refer to groups of persons that 'grieve the heart'. The first one deals with sexual offenders (Ecclus. xxiii 16 f.): <sup>2)</sup>

Two sorts of men multiply sins,  
and a third incurs wrath:  
The soul heated like a burning fire  
will not be quenched until it is consumed;  
a man who commits fornication with his near of kin  
will never cease until the fire burns him up.  
To a fornicator all bread tastes sweet;  
he will never cease until he dies.

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<sup>1)</sup> Toy, *op. cit.*, p. 527.

<sup>2)</sup> The title-lines of the numerical sayings in Ecclus., if graded, give the second numeral as an ordinal. The Hebrew original had in these cases probably a cardinal, cf. the Syriac of Ecclus. xxv 7 (the second number is a cardinal). Cf. also Ecclus. l 25 where the second numeral is an ordinal in the extant Hebrew original.

This text groups together the voluptuous man, the man committing incest, and the adulterer. <sup>1)</sup> The saying strikes a note of hopelessness in that a change for the better is not expected. A similar grouping is that of Ecclus. xxv 2:

My soul hates three kinds of men,  
and I am greatly offended at their life:  
a beggar who is proud,  
a rich man who is a liar,  
and an adulterous old man who lacks good sense.

Each social class must be marked by a behaviour which is appropriate to its standing in society. The three types listed here do not exhibit a bearing fitting for them. Similar is Ecclus. xxvi 28:

At two things my heart is grieved,  
and because of a third anger comes over me:  
a warrior in want through poverty,  
and intelligent men who are treated contemptuously;  
a man who turns back from righteousness to sin . . .

Ecclus. xxvi 5 f., the following text, refers not so much to social groupings as to the actions characteristic of certain strata of society: <sup>2)</sup>

Of three things my heart is afraid,  
and of a fourth I am frightened:  
The slander of a city,  
the gathering of a mob,  
and false accusation—  
all these are worse than death.  
There is grief of heart and sorrow  
when a wife is envious of a rival, . . .

This numerical saying is a telling introduction to Oriental city life. The reference to the envious wife, however, does not fit into this context well.

The observation of social life on the national plane led Jesus ben Sira to the formulation of Ecclus. 1 25 f.: <sup>3)</sup>

With two nations my soul is vexed,  
and the third is no nation:

<sup>1)</sup> For a detailed interpretation see Rudolf SMEND, *Die Weisheit des Jesus Sirach erklärt* (Berlin 1906), pp. 209-211.

<sup>2)</sup> The text and the exact delineation are not certain in all respects, e.g. 5 b is difficult in Greek, and the Syriac differs from the LXX in the description of items (3) and (4).

<sup>3)</sup> Read with the Hebrew text and the Vulgate (against the LXX) in 26 a 'Mount Seir' (a reference to Edom).

Those who live on Mount Seir,  
and the Philistines,  
and the foolish people that dwell in Shechem.

This graded numerical saying lists the Edomites, the Philistines, and the 'heretic' Samaritans as abhorred by the speaker. Commentators are baffled by the appearance of this strange sigh at the end of the "Praise of the Fathers" and before the postscript (1 27-29). <sup>1)</sup> It is not clear who is speaking these words. Usually it is assumed that it is Jesus ben Sira. It could also be that God is thought of as speaking. In this case the numerical saying must be understood as God's answer to the "Praise of the Fathers", assuring his people of their election by condemning the three neighbouring peoples and, in the case of the Edomites and the Samaritans, competing nations. All this is a far cry from Is. xlv 22 f. and xlix 6!

Jesus ben Sira also reflected on the good sides of social life. Ecclus. xxv 1 comments on three basic human relationships: that between brothers, that between neighbours, and that between husband and wife. In each case the attitude which makes for a harmonious life is praised: <sup>2)</sup>

My soul takes pleasure in three things,  
and they are beautiful in the sight of the Lord and men:  
agreement between brothers,  
friendship between neighbours,  
and a wife and husband who live in harmony.

Similarly Ecclus. xxv 7-11, a rather lengthy composition, groups together ten desirable things, all pertaining to social life. The Greek text lists only nine items, while the Syriac text has ten. <sup>3)</sup> The fact that the extant Hebrew fragments agree more closely <sup>4)</sup> with the Syriac version than the LXX suggests that the Syriac is closer to the original Hebrew than the LXX. The general character of the numerical saying is however clear from the LXX on which, in turn, the *R.S.V.* rendering rests:

With nine thoughts I have gladdened my heart,  
and a tenth I shall tell with my tongue:  
a man rejoicing in his children;

<sup>1)</sup> Cf. SMEND, *op. cit.*, pp. 490 f.

<sup>2)</sup> The title-line acc. to the emendation of the *R.S.V.*

<sup>3)</sup> Syriac text in Paul A. de LAGARDE, ed., *Libri Veteris Testamenti Apocryphi Syriaca* (Leipzig/London 1861), pp. 25 f.

<sup>4)</sup> Hebrew fragments in Israel LEVI, ed., *The Hebrew Text of Ecclesiasticus* (Leiden 1904), p. 27.

a man who lives to see the downfall of his foes;  
 happy is he who lives with an intelligent wife,  
 and he who has not made a slip with his tongue,  
 and he who has not served a man inferior to himself,  
 happy is he who has gained good sense,  
 and he who speaks to attentive listeners,  
 How great is he who has gained wisdom!  
 But there is no one superior to him who fears the Lord.  
 The fear of the Lord surpasses everything;  
 to whom shall be likened the one who holds it fast?

This numerical saying is a compend of the happy and right life for the average citizen. Much profound observation has gone into it. On the other hand, the composition has an artificial element. The employment of the numerical saying in this case can be said to border on mannerism. Jesus ben Sira, faithful follower and imitator of the sages of old, stretches in this case a literary genre almost beyond its capacity.

A graded numerical saying, preserved in the Aramaic papyri from Elephantine, is similar to those found in ancient Hebrew Wisdom Literature. It lists three praiseworthy social attitudes (Wisdom of Aḥiqar, col. vi): <sup>1)</sup>

Two things which are meet,  
 and three pleasing to Shamash:  
 one who dr[inks] wine and gives it to drink,  
 one who guards wisdom,  
 and one who hears a word and does not tell.

The title-line is of the same structure as e.g. Prov. xxx 18. The second numeral must be translated as a cardinal. The mention of the god Shamash indicates that this text comes originally from Mesopotamia. The 'Hymn to Shamash' <sup>2)</sup> with its enumeration of classes of people who do right and who do wrong demonstrates that this god was worshipped as the guarantor of the moral world order, and that the Aḥiqar numerical saying belongs to this or a similar cultural setting. The Akkadian "Counsels of Wisdom", <sup>3)</sup> written some time before 700 B.C., offer direct parallels to the items listed in the numerical saying. <sup>4)</sup>

<sup>1)</sup> Translation of H. L. GINSBERG, *A.N.E.T.*, p. 428 c (except for the rendering of the second numeral). The original text publication: Eduard SACHAU, ed., *Aramäische Papyri und Ostraca aus einer jüdischen Militär-Kolonie zu Elephantine* (Leipzig 1911), plate 44 (papyrus 53, lines 14-15a).

<sup>2)</sup> Translated by Ferris J. STEPHENS, *A.N.E.T.*, pp. 387-389.

<sup>3)</sup> Translated by Robert H. PFEIFFER, *A.N.E.T.*, pp. 426 f.

<sup>4)</sup> Cf. the first item with 'Counsels of Wisdom', obverse ii 12 (*A.N.E.T.*, p. 426), the second item of the numerical saying with obverse i 18 f. (*ibid.*), and the third item with reverse A, line 31 (*A.N.E.T.*, p. 427).

Three desirable social attitudes are grouped together: (1) giving also to others that of which one has sufficiently, (2) restraining one's wise counsels (it is not clear under which circumstances), and (3) not revealing that which has been confided. <sup>1)</sup> This reflective numerical saying undoubtedly also fulfilled a didactic function in that it holds out for imitation these three desirable social behaviour patterns.

The discussion of Old Testament numerical sayings resulting from a reflection on society and its orders has revealed that except for Prov. xxx 21-23 all texts are characterized by a religious sentiment. This is only to be expected since the faith of Israel (and other religions as well) is concerned with the regulation of interhuman relationships in accordance with the basic tenets of that religion.

#### OBSERVATION OF MAN

It is significant that the Old Testament contains no numerical sayings which are the outcome of *non*-theological reflection on anthropology. Already the Yahwist had taken up the question 'What is man?' and answered it in his own way: man is created from the earth and has received from God the breath of life. It may safely be assumed that this belief in man's creatureliness, in one form or another, was known well enough so as to cut short non-theological anthropological reflections. The assertion of the Priestly writers that man is created in the image of God, male and female, in order to rule over God's creation, further indicates that theological reflection concerning man had not stood still but had brought forth new answers and views; cf. Ps. viii 4-8 and Ezek. xxviii 12-14.

In the oldest collection of the Book of Proverbs a short inverted numerical saying occurs which embodies the result of observation of human nature on the basis of the faith in God as creator (Prov. xx 12):

The hearing ear and the seeing eye,  
the LORD has made them both.

The coordination of ear and eye as created by God emphasizes their equal value as organs of perception. Each has its own function in its own right, for "the LORD has made everything for its purpose" (Prov. xvi 4 a; cf. Ex. iv 11, Ps. xciv 9). Hence the numerical saying does not contain an ethical teaching but rather a systematizing coor-

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<sup>1)</sup> Cf. A. COWLEY, ed., *Aramaic Papyri of the Fifth Century B.C.* (Oxford 1923), p. 236.

dination of the two principal faculties of human perception (cf. Ps. xciv 9 and Prov. xxii 2). <sup>1)</sup>

In post-Biblical literature various numerical sayings are found which deal, from different theological standpoints, with the phenomenon 'man'. They attempt to fix certain orders of human behaviour or of human constitution. To the first group belong numerical sayings found in the fifth chapter of the Mishnah tractate Pirqe Aboth. Several deal with human behaviour, especially that of students. An engaging but also difficult example is found in v 18: <sup>2)</sup>

Four types of them that sit before the wise:  
a sponge, a funnel, a strainer, and a sieve.

The explanation is immediately appended:

A sponge, because it sucks up everything;  
a funnel, because it receives at one end  
and lets out at the other;  
a strainer, because it lets out the wine  
and keeps back the dregs;  
a sieve, because it lets out the coarse meal  
and keeps the fine flour.

This descriptions of students' dispositions is based on the observation that different types of students respond differently to the labours of their teachers. Some retain every word said, others forget all that has been taught; some grasp only that which is of little importance, others are able to sift and to retain that which is of first importance. <sup>3)</sup> Four different human dispositions in learning have thus been categorized, and that in a quite humorous fashion.

Pirqe Aboth v 17 deals with a similar grouping:

Four types of them that go to the house of learning:  
He that goes and does nothing, has the reward of *his* going;  
he that goes not but does *something*, has the reward of doing;  
he that goes and does *something*, is pious;  
he that neither goes nor does *anything*, is wicked.

This numerical saying classifies students according to whether they either go to school or do 'kindnesses'. The most acceptable behaviour

<sup>1)</sup> Against TOY, *op. cit.*, p. 388, and Charles T. FRITSCH, 'Proverbs', *I.B.* IV, p. 897, who deduce an ethical exhortation from this text.

<sup>2)</sup> The numerical sayings from Pirqe Aboth are given according to the numbering and translation of R. TRAVERS HERFORD, *A.P.O.T.* II.

<sup>3)</sup> The saying is not altogether clear. The sieve refers to the kind of sieve which was used to separate the desired coarse meal from the less useful fine (dust) meal, so Kurt GALLING, *B.R.L.*, cols. 480 f.

is to do both, the least to do neither. This summary undoubtedly also has a hortatory purpose in that it warns the Jews not to ignore these two basic duties of their faith.

Another numerical saying of the same collection deals with receiving and losing what is taught (v 15):

Four types of disciples:  
 Quick to hear and quick to lose,  
     his gain is cancelled by his loss.  
 Slow to learn and slow to lose,  
     his loss is cancelled by his gain.  
 Quick to hear and slow to lose, he is wise.  
 Slow to hear and quick to lose, this is an evil lot.

The highest aim of the student was to learn most effectively, retaining as much as possible. Not all students conformed to this ideal. The numerical saying just quoted lists the four possibilities, clearly stating the best and the worst type. A certain delight in systematizing is obvious in the phrasing.

Other numerical sayings of this collection deal more generally with human attitudes. A saying patterned in the same way as the one last quoted is v 14:

Four types of character:  
 Easy to provoke and easy to pacify,  
     his gain is cancelled by his loss.  
 Hard to provoke and hard to pacify,  
     his loss is cancelled by his gain.  
 Hard to provoke and easy to pacify, he is pious.  
 Easy to provoke and hard to pacify, he is wicked.

This categorization is the outcome of a more general observation of human character. That which is most and that which is least desirable, clearly stand out. Also in this text a hortative element can be discerned.

The attitude to earthly possessions is the object of reflection in Pirqe Aboth v 13:

Four types of men:  
 He that says, what is mine is mine and what is thine is  
     thine; this is the average type . . .  
*He that says*, what is mine is thine and what is thine is  
     mine, is one of the vulgar;  
*He that says*, what is mine and what is thine are thine,  
     is pious.  
*He who says*, what is thine and what is mine are mine,  
     is wicked.

The description speaks for itself and needs little comment. The definition of piety as selflessness with regard to possessions is a lofty one and is also intended as an ethical exhortation. Similar is the numerical saying Pirqe Aboth v 16 which deals with alms-giving:

Four types of almsgivers:

He who is willing to give but not that others should give,  
his eye is evil towards what is theirs;

*he who is willing* that others should give but does not  
give himself, his eye is evil towards what is his;

*he who is willing* to give and that others should give,  
is pious;

he who is not willing that he should give or that others  
should give, is wicked.

Almsgiving is reflected upon under the aspect of other peoples' almsgiving and so is seen under the aspect of how it increases or decreases one's personal prestige. Again an ethical emphasis is evident.

A double numerical saying, contrasting three desirable attitudes to their three corresponding undesirable attitudes, is found Pirqe Aboth v 22:

Every one who has three things is one of the disciples of Abraham our father. And *every one who has* three other things is one of the disciples of Balaam the wicked. *If he has* a good eye, and a lowly soul and a humble spirit, he is of the disciples of Abraham our father. *If he has* an evil eye, and a boastful soul and a haughty spirit, he is of the disciples of Balaam the wicked . . . (follows a discussion of the difference between Abraham and Balaam)

A certain delight in systematizing has shaped this numerical saying. But also an ethical element can be discerned in that three desirable attitudes are contrasted with three corresponding undesirable attitudes, evidently with the implied exhortation not to be 'one of the disciples of Balaam'.

This discussion of numerical sayings reflecting on man and found in Pirqe Aboth v may be concluded with a listing of seven qualities of a wise man (v 10):

Seven things concerning a rude man, and seven concerning a wise man. A wise man does not speak in the presence of one who is greater than he in wisdom; and he does not break in upon the words of his associate; and he does not hasten to reply; he asks according to the Rule, and answers according to the subject; and he speaks on the first thing first, and on the last last; concerning what he has not heard he says, I have not heard; and he acknowledges the truth. The opposites of these are *found* in the rude man.

This numerical saying lists the *notae* of the man who behaves properly in scholarly disputations. The normative character of this text is obvious; one can be in doubt whether this text is not primarily of a hortative character. As has already been pointed out, in many examples of the genre the reflective and the hortatory elements are both appearing and so a clear line between these two usages cannot be drawn.

Two passages from Ecclesiasticus may be noted in passing. They are not numerical sayings *stricto sensu* because a number does not appear in a title-line. They are lists of basic necessities of human life. Ecclus. xxxix 21 mentions as "essentials for life" the following: water, bread, clothing, and housing. Ecclus. xxxix 26 lists ten items as "basic to all the needs of a man's life", namely, water, fire, iron, salt, wheat, milk, honey, wine, oil, and clothing. These passages show that Hebrew Wisdom defined minimum requirements for human existence.

A prose numerical saying from the Dead Sea Scrolls indicates that this genre offers itself for the exposition of various dualistic concepts. Thus the Manual of Discipline (iii 13 - iv 26) refers to the two spirits which God assigned to man and established in equal measure until the final age. In the introductory paragraph of this section an anthropological dualistic doctrine is summarized thus (1 QS iii 17-21): <sup>1)</sup>

He (God) has created man to govern the world, and has appointed for him two spirits in which to walk until the time of His visitation: the spirits of truth and falsehood.

The text then proceeds to contrast these two in dualistic fashion:

Those born of truth spring from a fountain of light, but those born of falsehood spring from a source of darkness. All the children of righteousness are ruled by the Prince of Light and walk in the ways of light; but all the children of falsehood are ruled by the Angel of Darkness and walk in the ways of darkness . . .

After a lengthy description of the 'two ways' of the two spirits they are further characterized as fighting in the present time on this earth, and there especially within the human heart (iv 16 f.; 23 f.):

For God has established the spirits in equal measure until the final age, and has set everlasting hatred between their divisions . . . Until now the spirits of truth and falsehood struggle in the hearts of men and they walk in both wisdom and folly.

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<sup>1)</sup> Translation of G. VERMES, *The Dead Sea Scrolls in English* (Pelican Book 1962), pp. 75 f.

The problem of the origin of the doctrine of the two spirits has been widely discussed and has received various answers. <sup>1)</sup> Some scholars think of Persian influence, others of a Stoic origin. An Old Testament background is advocated by still others. It has also been pointed out that the dualistic struggle motif already occurs in the Ugaritic texts and may ultimately derive from these. <sup>2)</sup> More recently some scholars have asserted that "these spirits are simply the tendencies or propensities which are implanted in every man's heart". <sup>3)</sup> This last explanation could be described as psychological and could claim the support of the phrase "in the hearts of men" (1 QS iv 23). The Iranian parallels, on the other hand, are of great weight, too. Without further entering into this discussion it should be observed that in any case the pattern of the numerical saying appears as a literary form well suited to formulate dualistic concepts. Concordant with dualistic thinking the genre stresses the exclusiveness of the two principles by making the numerical value 'two' central and by setting in the list of the numerical saying side by side the two principles of good and evil.

In the light of this it is not astonishing that wherever and whenever dualistic thinking occurs, the pattern of the numerical saying may appear. This may be illustrated from various texts and from different spheres of human reflection or exhortation. As might be expected, Zoroastrian texts contain sequences of dualistic numerical sayings (Yasna 30, 3-5): <sup>4)</sup>

Now at the beginning the twin spirits have declared their nature,  
The better and the evil, in thought and word and deed.  
And when these two spirits came together,  
In the beginning they established life and non-life; . . .

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<sup>1)</sup> For this and the following see Hans KOSMALA, review of H. W. HUPPENBAUER, 'Der Mensch zwischen zwei Welten', *V.T.* XI (1961), pp. 356-58, especially p. 357.

<sup>2)</sup> Cyrus H. GORDON, 'Canaanite Mythology', in: Samuel Noah KRAMER, ed., *Mythologies of the Ancient World* (Garden City, N. Y. 1961), pp. 201 f.

<sup>3)</sup> M. TREVES, 'The Two Spirits of the Rule of the Community', *Revue de Qumran* 3 (1961/62), pp. 449-52 (quoted according to the summary of G. FOHRER, *Z.A.W.* 74 (1962), pp. 229 f.). Similarly argues P. WERNBERG-MØLLER, *ibid.*, pp. 413-41 (according to *Z.A.W.* 74, p. 229). Contrast H. G. MAY, 'Cosmological Reference in the Qumran Doctrine of the Two Spirits and in Old Testament Imagery', *J.B.L.* 82 (1963), pp. 1-14.

<sup>4)</sup> Translation of Jacques DUCHESNE-GUILLEMIN, *The Hymns of Zarathustra*, transl. from the French by Mrs. M. HENNING (London 1952), p. 105. I am indebted to Prof. D. H. BARDYKE, Leipzig, who in a private communication drew my attention to other numerical sayings setting forth the Zoroastrian dualism, e.g. Yasna 10, 16 and Yascht 4, 6.

Of these two spirits, the evil one chose to do the worst things;  
But the Most Holy Spirit . . . joined himself unto Righteousness; . . .

Zoroastrian dualism, whatever its mythological and ethical implications, understands man as determined by two forces. The genre of the numerical saying offered itself as a convenient literary form for the summary description of such dualism.

A doctrine of the two spirits, akin to that of 1 QS iii 13ff., but modified by the introduction of a third spirit that chooses between the two, appears in the Testament of Judah xx 1 f.: <sup>1)</sup>

. . . two spirits wait upon man—the spirit of truth and the spirit of deceit. And in the midst is the spirit of understanding of the mind, to which it belongeth to turn whithersoever it will.

The addition of the third spirit which is within man, as against the two spirits which are without him, is a logical development if man is understood to have the choice between the two.

Already in Homeric thought a reflection on the appearance of good and evil in the human life is found. It is in Zeus' hands to send both; he may mix the two or send only one (Iliad xxiv 527-33): <sup>2)</sup>

Two vessels are set upon the floor of Zeus' abode, full of gifts, which he hands out. One is filled with good gifts, the other with evil ones. The man to whom thundering Zeus sends gifts mixed (from both), he meets with bad at one time, but with good at other times. The man, however, to whom he gives bad things (only), him he makes despitefully treated . . ., honoured neither by gods nor by men.

This text, a prose numerical saying with an appended explanation, reduced the bewildering changes in the fortunes of human life to two possibilities: Zeus either sends only bad gifts or he mixes good and bad. Every human life can be classified under the one or under the other. Thus an order relating to man's life has been discovered and formulated.

A different type of anthropological reflection is mirrored in a numerical saying framed by Democritus (circa 460-370 B.C.). It presupposes a duality of human knowledge (Fragment 11): <sup>3)</sup>

There are two forms of knowledge, one genuine, one obscure. To the obscure belong all of the following: sight, hearing, smell, taste, feeling. The other form is . . . the genuine way of knowing, which has a finer organ of thought.

<sup>1)</sup> Translation of R. H. CHARLES, *A.P.O.T.* II, p. 322.

<sup>2)</sup> Paulus CAUER, ed., *Homērou Epē* (Leipzig 1921), p. 532.

<sup>3)</sup> Translation quoted by T. V. SMITH, ed., *From Thales to Plato*, 2nd ed. (Chicago 1956), p. 40.

This categorization advanced by Democritus must be seen in its contemporary philosophical setting, <sup>1)</sup> because it was in his scholarly arguments with Protagoras that this definition of twofold knowledge was formulated.

A basically Stoic definition of the two sources of all passions has been framed by the author of the Jewish-Hellenistic treatise entitled 4. Maccabees (i 20): <sup>2)</sup>

But of the passions there are two comprehensive sources, namely, pleasure and pain, and either belongs essentially also to the soul as well as to the body.

This prose numerical saying appears as summary of a presupposition for the ensuing philosophical treatise. It is patterned after similar Stoic summaries but is influenced by the Jewish faith in God as creator of all. <sup>3)</sup> Again it can be observed that the genre of the numerical saying offered itself as a convenient form to express a duality discovered in anthropological reflection.

Similar reflections are found in the Jewish-Hellenistic Book of the Secrets of Enoch. In chapters xxviii - xxx a vision is recorded in which are revealed to Enoch details of God's work of creation in seven days, details which are not contained in the canonical accounts. With reference to the creation of man two numerical sayings, put into the mouth of God, define the consistencies out of which man is made, and his natures (xxx 8 f.): <sup>4)</sup>

On the sixth day I commanded my wisdom to create man from seven consistencies:  
 one, his flesh from the earth;  
 two, his blood from the dew;  
 three, his eyes from the sun;  
 four, his bones from stone;  
 five, his intelligence from the swiftness of the angels . . . ;  
 six, his veins and his hair from the grass of the earth;  
 seven, his soul from my breath and from the wind.

Immediately following a second numerical saying lists the 'natures' attributed to each 'consistency':

And I gave him seven natures:  
 to the flesh hearing,  
 the eyes for sight,

<sup>1)</sup> John BURNET, *Greek Philosophy. Thales to Plato* (London 1914), pp. 196-98.

<sup>2)</sup> Translation of R. B. TOWNSHEND, *A.P.O.T.* II, p. 668.

<sup>3)</sup> Cf. the footnote to i 20, *ibid.*

<sup>4)</sup> Translation of Nevill FORBES and R. H. CHARLES, *A.P.O.T.* II, pp. 448 f.

to the soul smell,  
 the veins for touch,  
 the blood for taste,  
 the bones for endurance,  
 to the intelligence sweetness . . .

These listings must be understood against the contemporary Stoic and Philonic philosophical background where similar listings occur.<sup>1)</sup> They are the result of anthropological reflection concerning the structure of man as intellectual being. The answers may vary from one philosophical system to the other, but in several cases the literary pattern of the numerical saying was employed for a short descriptive summary of the findings.

Two texts from the Testament of Reuben, a composition which combines Stoic ideas with intertestamental demonology, may conclude this section. The literary aspects of these texts are complicated; suffice it to state that the mentioning of 'seven spirits of deceit' (ii 1) drew an interpolation into the text.<sup>2)</sup> This interpolation is a lengthy numerical saying describing the function of each 'spirit' given to man 'at his creation' (ii 3 - iii 1):<sup>3)</sup>

And seven other spirits are given to him at his creation,  
 that through them should be done every work of man.  
 The first is the spirit of life, with which the constitution (of man) is  
 created.  
 The second is the sense of sight, with which ariseth desire.  
 The third is the sense of hearing, with which cometh teaching.  
 The fourth is the sense of smell, with which tastes are given.  
 The fifth is the power of speech, with which cometh knowledge.  
 The sixth is the sense of taste, with which cometh the eating.  
 The seventh is the power of procreation and sexual intercourse, with  
 which through love of pleasure sin enters in . . .  
 Besides all these there is an eighth spirit of sleep, with which is brought  
 about the trance of nature and the image of death.

"The division of the bodily senses here given is based on Stoic theories . . . The Stoics held that the soul had eight parts, namely, the five senses, the powers of reproduction and speech, and the dominant part or reason which ruled the other seven."<sup>4)</sup>

The interpolation of the text just discussed was called forth by a

<sup>1)</sup> Cf. the footnote to xxx 8 f., *ibid.*

<sup>2)</sup> R. H. CHARLES, *A.P.O.T.* II, pp. 296 f.

<sup>3)</sup> Translation of CHARLES, *op. cit.*, p. 297.

<sup>4)</sup> CHARLES, *ibid.*

description of the seven spirits of deceit in the form of an enumerating list (iii 2-6): <sup>1</sup>)

With these spirits are mingled the spirits of error.  
 First, the spirit of fornication . . .  
 the second, the spirit of insatiableness . . .  
 the third, the spirit of fighting . . .  
 the fourth, . . . the spirit of obsequiousness . . .  
 the fifth . . . the spirit of pride . . .  
 the sixth . . . the spirit of lying . . .  
 the seventh . . . the spirit of injustice . . .

These spirits are presented as standing in certain fixed relationships with the spirits given to man at his creation. In this case a vice-catalogue summarizes anthropological reflection in that seven undesirable dispositions are grouped together.

There can be little doubt that the numerical sayings discussed in this section are the result of philosophical or theological observation of the phenomenon 'man'. As is to be expected, the standpoints of the observers influence the results of their reflections. This is especially obvious in the case of dualistic concepts where the pattern of the numerical saying presents itself as a suitable instrument for the formulation of basic orders. The reflective usage of the genre is clearly evident in these cases.

#### THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION

Reflection on the sphere of the divine leads not rarely to definitions of certain orders which are believed to exist in that realm. Polytheism provides the natural setting for such ordering and grouping reflection. Texts from ancient Egypt and ancient Mesopotamia indicate that there numerical sayings served to formulate the results of priestly reflection concerning the places and functions of various gods. A passage from the mythical tradition 'The Creation by Atum' illustrates this grouping of deities: <sup>2</sup>)

O great Ennead which is in Heliopolis,  
 Atum, Shu, Tefnut, Geb, Nut,  
 Osiris, Isis, Seth, and Nephthys.

Atum is the creator god, his two children are Shu, god of the air, and Tefnut, goddess of moisture; their children were Geb, god of the

<sup>1</sup>) For a similar interpolation see several minuscule MSS of Ecclus. xvii 4 (cf. CHARLES, *loc. cit.*).—The translation of iii 2-6 according to that of CHARLES, *A.P.O.T.* II, pp. 297 f.

<sup>2</sup>) Translation of John A. WILSON, *A.N.E.T.*, p. 3 b.

earth, and Nut, goddess of the sky. <sup>1)</sup> As 'children of Nut', are added main deities from the Osiris cycle: the god Osiris, the goddess Isis, the god Seth, the goddess Nephthys. This grouping, described as "the classical formulation of Egyptian creation dogmas", <sup>2)</sup> is an outcome of theological reflection and framed by the pattern of the numerical saying. The emphasis on the numerical element stresses the exclusiveness of this system of deities, which e.g. does not give a place to Horus the son of Osiris, nor to the sungod Re. The listing of the nine gods, on the other hand, coordinates them as the important deities. The ennead-grouping possibly existed already at the beginning of the Old Kingdom, i.e. in the middle of the third millennium B.C.

A similar grouping is the Ogdoad from Hermopolis. It groups together eight pre-creation gods: Nun and Naunet, the abysmal waters, Huh and Haunet, the endlessness, Kuk and Kauket, the darkness, and Aman and Amaunet, the invisibility (or Tenem and Tenemet, the pathlessness). It seems that the male-female dualism underlies this grouping in that four pairs of gods appear. <sup>3)</sup>

A text from the Nineteenth Dynasty, more than a thousand years later, presents a numerical saying which also is the result of theological reflection. In a hymn praising Amon as the sole god, the following passage occurs: <sup>4)</sup>

All gods are three: Amon, Re, and Ptah, and there is no second to them. "Hidden" is his name as Amon, he is Re in face, and his body is Ptah. Their cities are on earth, abiding forever: Thebes, Heliopolis, and Memphis unto eternity . . . Only he (is): Amon, with Re, (and with Ptah)—together three.

This passage is remarkable because it attempts to set forth Amon-monotheism: "The text does not say: "There is no *fourth* to them." This is a statement of trinity, the three chief gods of Egypt subsumed under one of them, i.e. Amon." <sup>5)</sup> It is noteworthy that also in this case the genre of the numerical saying served to formulate the results of theological reflection.

From ancient Mesopotamia a similar text has survived in the Babylonian creation epic. After Marduk had defeated Tiamat, the gods acknowledge him as their supreme king. This is solemnly confirmed

<sup>1)</sup> For this and the following see WILSON, *loc. cit.*, footnote 5; W. HELCK/E. OTTO, *Kleines Wörterbuch der Ägyptologie* (Wiesbaden 1956), p. 245.

<sup>2)</sup> Eberhard OTTO, *Ägypten*, 3rd ed. (Stuttgart 1958), p. 57.

<sup>3)</sup> HELCK/OTTO, *op. cit.*, p. 26.

<sup>4)</sup> Translation of WILSON, *A.N.E.T.*, p. 369 a.

<sup>5)</sup> WILSON, *loc. cit.*, footnote 11.

by their 'proclaiming his fifty names' (vi 122). A list giving these names, along with their explanations, follows (vi 123 - vii 136):<sup>1)</sup>

- (1) MARDUK, as Anu, his father, called him  
from his birth; who provides grazing and drinking places, ...
- (2) MARUKKA verily is the god, creator of all,  
who gladdens the heart of the Anunnaki, ...
- (3) MARUTUKKU verily is the refuge of the land, ...  
... (follow names (4) to (49)) ...  
Father Enlil called his name (50) 'LORD OF THE LANDS'.

"The names summarize what Marduk is and what he signifies: the final victory over chaos and the establishing of the ordered, organized universe ... each (name is) expressing one aspect of his being, each defining one of his functions."<sup>2)</sup> The impressive catalogue was intended as a compend covering the order of the divine sphere, as the lines immediately following it indicate (vii 145 f., 151 f.):

Let them be kept (in mind) and let the leader explain them.  
Let the wise and the knowing discuss them together ...  
Firm in his (Marduk's) order, his command unalterable,  
The utterance of his mouth no god shall change.

The catalogue of divine attributes of Marduk does not only summarize what Marduk is, but is probably also designed to serve as basic for further reflection. The systematizing function of the pattern is evident in this example of the pattern.

The monotheism of the Old Testament precludes any systematization of deities as found in polytheism. "The number "one" is basic to the doctrine of monotheism."<sup>3)</sup> The thought of the Deuteronomic preacher-theologians makes this clear (Deut. vi 4 f.):

Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one ...

This monotheistic formula is echoed many a time in the Old Testament and in other Jewish-Christian literature. Hence there occurs no numerical saying in the Old Testament coordinating different deities.

The developed *angelology* of the intertestamental period, however, led here and there to groupings of three, four, or seven (arch-)angels.<sup>4)</sup> Such angelic orders must be considered the outcome of theological

<sup>1)</sup> Translation of E. A. SPEISER, *A.N.E.T.*, pp. 69 - 72.

<sup>2)</sup> Thorkild JACOBSEN, 'Mesopotamia', H. and H. A. FRANKFORT et al., *The Intellectual Adventure of Ancient Man* (Chicago 1946), p. 183.

<sup>3)</sup> M. H. POPE, 'Number, Numbering, Numbers', *I.D.B.* III, p. 563.

<sup>4)</sup> Cf. T. H. GASTER, 'Angel', *I.D.B.* I, p. 132.

reflection. The best known grouping is that of the four archangels (1. Enoch xl 2, 9 f., cf. lxxi 9): <sup>1)</sup>

... on the four sides of the Lord of Spirits I saw four presences, ... and I learnt their names: ... 'This first is Michael, the merciful and long suffering; and the second, who is set over all the diseases ... is Raphael; and the third, who is set over all the powers, is Gabriel; and the fourth, who is set over the repentance unto hope ... is named Phanuel.' And these are the four angels of the Lord of Spirits ...

Each angel is assigned a specific function. In earlier times these functions were directly attributed to God; developing angelology (and demonology) connected the various spheres of divine (or Satanic) operation with different subordinate divine (or Satanic) powers. The lists of angels given do not always agree; 1. Enoch ix 1 lists Michael, Uriel, Raphael, and Gabriel, while 1 QM ix 15 f. list Michael, Gabriel, Sariel, and Raphael. 1. Enoch xx (cf. Tobit xii 15) lists seven archangels: Uriel, Raphael, Raguel, Michael, Saragael, Gabriel, and Ramiel. The theories of intertestamental theologians concerning the numbers and their symbolic meanings, the names, and the functions of archangels, angels, and demons were probably more clearly understood then; suffice it to say that each listing, through the medium of numerical sayings or through other types of lists, must be considered the results of systematizing reflection.

Ps. lxii 11 f. is the result of theological reflection concerning *God's attributes*:

Once God has spoken;  
twice have I heard this:  
that power belongs to God;  
and that to thee, O Lord, belongs steadfast love.

The position of this text at the end of the psalm is noteworthy: In this passage the psalmist formulates the basis of his confidence in Yahweh in the literary formula of the graded numerical saying. There is reason to believe that the psalmist refers to the recitation of cult traditions at the worship-centres of ancient Israel. <sup>2)</sup> The recital of Yahweh's mighty acts of salvation in history and nature, e.g. in the words of Ps. cxxxvi, prompted the psalmist to reflect on those attri-

<sup>1)</sup> Translation of R. H. CHARLES, *The Book of Enoch or 1 Enoch* (Oxford 1912), pp. 77, 79.

<sup>2)</sup> Cf. Artur WEISER, *Die Psalmen*, 5th ed. (Göttingen 1959), p. 308, cf. also pp. 28 f. and SAUER, *op. cit.*, pp. 88, 117.

butes of God which effect these mighty acts. To such theological reflection the discovery is granted that these two, Yahweh's might and his covenant love, stand behind God's actions with Israel. "As a revelation of divine being has this disclosure been given to the poet, and he hands it on as word of God to the congregation . . . The whole content of God's revelation in the covenant-cult is contained in the two statements describing this discovery: To God belongs power and to him belong grace. In the co-ordination of power and grace lies the essence of the Old Testament faith."<sup>1)</sup> If this interpretation is correct, it was the genre of the numerical saying which became the vessel for these dogmatics in a nutshell. The numerical value 'two' reduced all possible causes for God's mighty acts to only two: power and grace. The listing by way of coordination affirms their dialectical relationship; one without the other or one subordinated to the other would not render an adequate definition of the result of that theological reflection.

Ps. lxii 11 f. is the only numerical saying in the Old Testament which is based on theological reflection. The New Testament, however, contains several numerical sayings which are the outcome of such reflection. Mk. ix 5 (Mt. xvii 4, Lk. ix 33) speaks of three booths which Peter wishes to erect on the mountain of transfiguration:

And Peter said to Jesus, "Master, it is well that we are here; let us make three booths here, one for you and one for Moses and one for Elijah."

This suggestion of Peter was indirectly branded by the heavenly voice (Mk. ix 5) as unacceptable. However, what is significant is the coordination of the three figures. Moses and Elijah were considered by some Jewish groups as the two forerunners of the Messiah.<sup>2)</sup> If in Mk. ix 5 Jesus is to be assigned a booth along with Moses and Elijah, it can only mean that Peter thought that he could now, on the basis of Moses' and Elijah's speaking with Jesus (Mk. ix 3), be grouped together with these two into a triad of eschatological forerunners. This leads into the wide and complicated field of apocalyptic theologizing concerning the events ushering in the New Age. Mk. ix 5 may reflect, in grouping Jesus together with Moses and Elijah as eschatological forerunners, a theological appraisal of Jesus and his role held by certain (Jewish ?) groups but not acceptable to the early Christians.

<sup>1)</sup> WEISER, *op. cit.*, p. 308.

<sup>2)</sup> J. JEREMIAS, 'El(e)ias', *Tb.W.B.N.T.* II. p. 941.

The prose numerical saying Mk. ix 5 thus possibly reflects a certain stage or aspect of apocalyptic theological thought.

As may be expected, intertestamental and early Christian theology offers other examples of grouping together certain eschatological figures or offices. The "two witnesses" of Rev. xi 3 are by some scholars explained as the dyad Peter/Paul who together play the key function of preceding Antichrist.<sup>1)</sup> Even if this interpretation is not tenable, Rev. xi 3 echoes some kind of theological reflection. The same can be said of the two "Messiahs of Aaron and Israel" in 1 QS ix 11, a doctrine which represents "the special two Messiah concept of the Essenes".<sup>2)</sup> Again the pattern of the numerical saying serves to formulate the result of reflection.

The listing of three witnesses in 1. John v 8 is another example of the reflective usage of the numerical saying. The passage sums up the argument of v 6 f. by stating:

There are three witnesses, the Spirit, the water, and the blood; and these three agree.

"In the life of the church this meant the objective evidences of the true understanding of the faith: in holy inspiration, in the rite of baptism, and in the rite of the Lord's Supper."<sup>3)</sup> This little theological compend has later led to the insertion of the *comma Johanneum*. The classic formulations of the doctrine of the Trinity can appear in the form of a numerical saying, as the insertion 1. John v 7 indicates:

For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one. (*K.J.V.*)

Centuries of theological debate and reflection could culminate in the formulation of the Trinitarian doctrine in the simple pattern of the numerical saying.

The juxta-position of faith, hope, and love in 1. Cor. xiii 13 is another example of this type of theological reflection:

So faith, hope, love abide, these three;  
but the greatest of these is love.

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<sup>1)</sup> Johannes MUNCK, *Paul and the Salvation of Mankind*, transl. by Frank CLARKE (London 1959), p. 64; Oscar CULLMANN, *Die Christologie des Neuen Testaments*, 2nd ed. (Tübingen 1958), pp. 16 f.

<sup>2)</sup> Karl Georg KUHN, 'The Two Messiahs of Aaron and Israel', Krister STENDAHL, ed., *The Scrolls and the New Testament* (London 1958), p. 64.

<sup>3)</sup> Amos N. WILDER, '1 John', *I.B.* XII, p. 294.

Here the inverted numerical saying is followed by a qualifying sentence which lifts love out of the coordination with the other two virtues, thus indirectly demonstrating that the list of the numerical saying sets the enumerated items on one level. Commentators have observed that verse 13 does not fit well into the context. They suspect that Paul quotes a proverbial summary of Christian virtues which is also found elsewhere, e.g. 1. Thess. i 3. <sup>1)</sup> - In this connection mention should also be made of the "three doctrines of the Lord" which the writer of the Epistle of Barnabas describes in a numerical saying. But since the text of that passage is quite confused and possibly corrupt, a further discussion is not advisable. <sup>2)</sup>

Only once has reflection concerning the modes of God's revelation issued into the formulation of a numerical saying: Job xxxiii 14-30. The argument of the Elihu speech in xxxiii is as follows: After Elihu had pointed out to Job that he, now ready to give his counsels (1-3), is as human and frail as Job (4-7), he takes up Job's affirmation that he is guiltless and Job's request to go to law with God (8-12). Elihu replies to this request of Job that it is not right since "God is greater than man" (13 b). He proceeds to assure Job that God does answer and speak to human beings, but not in the way in which Job wishes him to speak. Then Elihu outlines in the form of a graded numerical saying God's two manners of 'speaking' to mortals: (1) dreams and mighty visions (15-18) and (2) sickness (19-30). The argument is closed with an appeal to Job to react favourably to Elihu's words. The juxta-position of vision and suffering as two 'modes' of divine revelation is as singular in the Old Testament as are the Elihu speeches themselves. Within the Job cycle (in the condition in which the author of the Elihu speeches found it) the assertion that God speaks in dream and vision had already been made (iv 12-16). Elihu coordinates with this a second mode of God's revelation: chastisement and sickness. "If Elihu has anything new to offer, it is the suggestion that suffering is disciplinary." <sup>3)</sup> It may even be said that "here in Elihu's contribution we find the one real insight into an understanding of human woe". <sup>4)</sup> It is noteworthy that the author of the Elihu speeches, a man

<sup>1)</sup> Clarence Tucker CRAIG, 'I Corinthians', *I.B.* X, pp. 193-95.

<sup>2)</sup> Ep. Barn. i 6. Cf. KIRSOPP LAKE, transl., *The Apostolic Fathers I* (London/Cambridge, Mass. 1912), p. 342.

<sup>3)</sup> M. H. POPE, 'Job, Book of', *I.D.B.* II, p. 291.

<sup>4)</sup> W.A. IRWIN, 'Job', Matthew BLACK, ed., *Peake's Commentary on the Bible* rev. ed. (London 1962), § 352 c.

given to theological reasoning, <sup>1)</sup> uses the literary genre of the numerical saying in order to explain the experience of suffering as the other mode of God's speaking to man. Theological reflection has here found and employed a literary form eminently suited for the formulation of its results: A new theological insight is given prominence and place by being coordinated with an old truth! <sup>2)</sup>

### REFLECTION ON HISTORY

It is understandable that several numerical sayings of the Old Testament are concerned with the observation of history. For ancient Israel "historical thinking belonged to the most elementary forms of understanding its own existence". <sup>3)</sup> The Old Testament abounds in literary compositions which are enquiries into the meaning of historical events individually as well as of history as a whole. Numerical sayings served not rarely as medium of formulation of the outcome of such reflection. On the other hand, ancient Near Eastern parallels to this usage of the numerical saying are comparatively rare. This is only to be expected because no other people of the Ancient World was occupied with its own history to the extent to which ancient Israel was.

Reflection on history focussed its attention most readily on *calamities* that struck the nation at one time or another. Natural disasters such as famine or plague were not only understood as divine punishments, but were also compared to each other as to their severity. The grouping together of various calamities could indicate that their severity was considered equal. Such a consideration underlies 2. Sam. xxiv 12 f. (= 1. Chron. xxi 10-12) where, within the context of David's census, three choices are given to the king by Gad the seer: <sup>4)</sup>

<sup>1)</sup> Georg FOHRER, 'Die Weisheit des Elihu (Hi 32-37)', *Archiv für Orientforschung* 19 (1959/60), pp. 83-94 (according to the summary in *Z.A.W.* 73 (1961), p. 230).

<sup>2)</sup> Samuel TERRIEN, 'Job', *I.B.* III, pp. 1136-39, can extract out of xxx 15-30 five different modes of divine revelation because he ignores the fact that xxx 14-30 are set in the pattern of the numerical saying, enumerating two (and not more) items. - Artur WEISER, *Das Buch Hiob*, 2nd ed. (Göttingen 1956), p. 224, draws attention to the "Zahlenspruch" pattern in connection with verses 29 f. and 14. However, verse 29 with its numerical sequence  $x/x+1$  is not the title-line of this numerical saying but belongs to the description of the second item. In this case  $x/x+1$  is an idiomatic expression for a slightly indefinite numerical value. Cf. Wolfgang M. W. ROTH, 'The Numerical Sequence  $x/x+1$  in the Old Testament', *V.T.* XII (1962), pp. 308-310.

<sup>3)</sup> Gerhard von RAD, 'Der Anfang der Geschichtsschreibung im alten Israel' (1944), *Gesammelte Studien zum Alten Testament* (München 1958), p. 150

<sup>4)</sup> Read 'three years of famine' with 1 Chron. xxi 12 and LXX.

“Go and say to David, ‘Thus says the LORD, three things I offer you; choose one of them, that I may do it to you.’” So Gad came to David and told him, and said to him, “Shall three years of famine come to you in your land? Or will you flee three months before your foes while they pursue you? Or shall there be three days of pestilence in your land?”

The three calamities in their temporal gradation—3 years of famine, 3 months of defeat, 3 days of plague—are of equal severity.<sup>1)</sup> Therefore they were grouped together in this fashion. Several passages in the Book of Jeremiah echo this grouping (xxi 7, 9; xxiv 10; xxvii 13; xxix 17; cf. Lev. xxvi 22-25).<sup>2)</sup>

Another numerical saying which groups together natural calamities stresses the fact that they all have this in common that they are sent by God as “judgments” (Ezek. xiv 21):

For thus says the Lord GOD: . . . I send upon Jerusalem my four sore acts of judgment, sword, famine, evil beasts, and pestilence, . . .

This passage in turn recapitulates the more detailed description of these four in the preceding section (xiv 13-20) where “this order of Yahweh’s righteousness is described in all its severity through all four manners of divine judgment”.<sup>3)</sup> The coordination of the four disasters as the four divine judgments is the outcome of reflection on history. It is noteworthy that the genre of the numerical saying served to frame the result of such reflection.

The “Plague Prayers of Mursilis”, a Hittite king of the 14th century B.C.,<sup>4)</sup> offer one of the few parallels from the ancient Near East. The king implores the deity to remove the plague from the land of the Hittites and

“Send ye the plague, hostility, famine (and) evil fever into the Mitanni land and the Arzawa land!”

Four calamities are here grouped together as divinely ordained, but the numerical value ‘four’ is not expressly mentioned.

The Old Testament lists or alludes to similar series of calamities coming to Israel as punishments. Jer. xv 3, for instance, speaks of four kinds:

<sup>1)</sup> Hans Wilhelm HERTZBERG, *Die Samuelbücher*, 2nd ed. (Göttingen 1960), p. 340.

<sup>2)</sup> Werner FUSS, ‘II Samuel’, *Z.A.W.* 74 (1962), p. 157.

<sup>3)</sup> Walther ZIMMERLI, *Ezechiel* (Neukirchen 1958), p. 322.

<sup>4)</sup> Translation of Albrecht GOETZE, *A.N.E.T.*, pp. 394-96. The passage quoted above is found on p. 396 b/c.

I will appoint over them four kinds of destroyers, says the LORD: the sword to slay, the dogs to tear, and the birds of the air and the beasts of the earth to devour and to destroy.

The passage is set within the last section of Jeremiah's drought lament (xiv 1 - xv 4) and elaborates one of the four choices left to Judah and listed in xv 2: pestilence, sword, famine, captivity. Of these death through the sword was considered the least horrible, but the ensuing maltreatment of the dead body, outlined in the numerical saying xv 3, made that kind of death as frightful as the other punishments described in xv 2.<sup>1)</sup> It is possible that the numerical value 'four' is traditional in this connection. The coordination of the four successive stages of dishonouring treatment of the corpse as divinely appointed suggests that it is also the result of reflection.

No numerical saying exists in the Old Testament which lists the plagues of Egypt. It is evident that different countings were current in different circles of tradition, but no clear picture has so far emerged from scholarly discussion. It seems the Yahwist counted seven and the Priestly writers possibly ten plagues.<sup>2)</sup>

In ancient Israel the worst calamity that could befall a woman was the loss of husband and children. These "two evils from which Babylon prided herself in being most secure are the ones which will befall her".<sup>3)</sup> In Is. xlvii 9 the prophet takes up the words of personified Babylon and asserts:

These two things shall come to you in a moment, in one day; the loss of children and widowhood shall come upon you in full measure.

It is evident that this grouping is the outcome of spontaneous prophetic speech and presupposes little or no conscious reflection. It seems that the prophet later used this pattern again together with the numerical value 'two' when he speaks in li 19 f. of two things that have ruined Jerusalem:

These two things have befallen you—  
who will condole with you?—  
devastation and destruction,  
famine and sword;  
who will comfort you?

<sup>1)</sup> Wilhelm RUDOLPH, *Jeremia*, 2nd ed. (Tübingen 1958), p. 95.

<sup>2)</sup> Cf. J. L. MIHELIC and G. E. WRIGHT, 'Plagues in Exodus', *I.D.B.* III, Table I (p. 823).

<sup>3)</sup> James MUILENBURG, 'Isaiah 40-66', *I.B.* V, p. 548 (Is. xlvii 9).

This numerical saying lists in fact four disasters even though the title-line speaks only of two. The title-line has been explained as “consciously fashioned after 47:9” and as “a good example of the poet’s dependence upon previous materials”.<sup>1)</sup> The prophet indeed referred to two calamities, “the ruin (1) of the land by devastation and destruction and (2) of the people by famine and sword”.<sup>2)</sup> It is noteworthy that in these texts historical reflection is concerned not with the past but with the future, describing an order discernible in God’s future dealings with Jerusalem. Similarly the three plagues mentioned in Rev. ix 18 as issuing from the horse’s mouth in the form of fire, smoke, and sulphur are a grouping of natural calamities understood as three manners of future divine judgment.

The prophetic mind of Jeremiah probed into the history of his people and discovered the evils which have drawn Israel away from God. In the covenant lawsuit passage Jer. ii 4-13 heaven (and earth? cf. verse 12) is called to witness against the House of Jacob who have “changed their glory”, that is, have turned away from God.<sup>3)</sup> No other nation has ever been found doing this! The passage ends with a reiteration of the accusation (ii 13):

For my people have committed two evils:  
they have forsaken me, the fountain of living waters,  
and hewed out cisterns for themselves, broken cisterns,  
that can hold no water.

Close observation of Israel’s history has led the prophet to a discovery of the real issues: Israel’s faithlessness toward God and religious self-sufficiency by turning to idols. These two are set side by side as ‘two evils’ which, in turn, constitute a negative order within Israel’s history. The genre of the numerical saying serves to express this prophetic interpretation of history. In the insight of Jeremiah “is made evident the inner law of sin in which the nation is caught: when it rejects God’s grace, it necessarily falls prey to the demons of its own foolishness”.<sup>4)</sup> The concentration of thought and word in passages like Jer. ii 13 is remarkable, revealing the discerning mind of the prophet in matters of history, the primary sphere of God’s action.

A Hittite text may serve as an illuminating parallel. When a plague

<sup>1)</sup> MUILENBURG, *op. cit.*, p. 604.

<sup>2)</sup> MUILENBURG, *loc. cit.*

<sup>3)</sup> Herbert B. HUFFMON, ‘The Covenant Lawsuit in the Prophets’, *J.B.L.* LXXVIII (1959), p. 287 f.

<sup>4)</sup> Artur WEISER, *Das Buch des Propheten Jeremia*, 3rd ed. (Göttingen 1959), p. 24.

had raged in the time of King Mursilis (14th century B.C.) for some twenty years, the king "made the anger of the gods a subject of an oracle".<sup>1)</sup> Thereupon the king learns of "two ancient tablets" which indicated that two religious obligations had not been fulfilled, i.e. (1) "offerings to the river Mala", and (2) a ritual obligation to the Hittian stormgod in matters of a political treaty. Both offences in fact concern this god. Even though they were not committed in the time of King Mursilis but in the days of his fathers, Mursilis gives the proper offerings in order to appease the stormgod. It is evident that in this (and other similar) Hittite texts "history is understood as the result of human action".<sup>2)</sup> Although the contents of the Hittite plague prayer differ from Jeremiah's covenant lawsuit, the pattern of historical reflection is similar. In both cases two 'evils' were discovered and singled out as responsible for a presently existing plight, in both cases the realm of history has become the object of reflection.

A numerical saying found in the intertestamental Wisdom of Solomon resembles in structure and function the passage Jer. ii 13. In a discussion of the various kinds of wickedness issuing from idolatry (xiv 9-29) the argument is summed up by a numerical saying listing the basic aberrations of the heathen (xiv 30):

But just penalties will overtake them on two counts:  
because they thought wickedly of God  
    in devoting themselves to idols,  
and because in deceit they swore unrighteously  
    through contempt for holiness.

Idolatry is the root evil (xiv 27). From it follows contempt for holiness which here stands summarily for all the fruits of idolatry.<sup>3)</sup>

Viewing the whole of Israel's history several prophets expounded through prose numerical sayings a basic *general order* discovered by them within that history. After the deportation of Jeconiah (Jehoia-

<sup>1)</sup> Plague Prayers of Mursilis, section a, according to the translation of Albrecht GOETZE, *A.N.E.T.*, pp. 394-96.

<sup>2)</sup> Hartmut GESE, 'Geschichtliches Denken im Alten Orient und im Alten Testament', *Z.Th.K.* 55 (1958), p. 138, in a discussion of these Hittite texts.

<sup>3)</sup> Johannes FICHTNER, *Weisheit Salomos* (Tübingen 1938), p. 55. According to SAUER, *op. cit.*, pp. 90, 117 f., also the series of Amos' threats against foreign neighbouring nations and to Israel and Judah (Am. i 3 ff.) is made up of numerical sayings. However, the strophes of this series cannot be considered as numerical sayings proper since they do not actually list the transgressions committed, but only refer to one crime. It is possible that the descriptions of the crimes are secondary in each strophe, so Theodore H. ROBINSON, *Die Zwölf Kleinen Propheten*, 2nd ed. (Tübingen 1954), p. 76.

chin) and his entourage to Babylon, Jeremiah sees the vision of the two baskets of figs (xxiv 1 b f.):

Behold, two baskets of figs placed before the temple of the LORD. One basket had very good figs, like first-ripe figs, but the other basket had very bad figs, so bad that they could not be eaten.

In the following lines the good figs are compared to the exiled in Babylon and the bad figs to those left in Jerusalem. This rating of the two parts of Israel seems to have been contrary to popular thinking (cf. Ezek. xi 3). The prophet's consideration of the situation has led him to characterize the true condition of the two parts of Israel in a parable which in turn employs the genre of the numerical saying. In this way attention is focussed exclusively on the two parts of the people of Judah. They are coordinated as both "placed before the temple of the Lord", that is, equally standing under God's judging presence. <sup>1)</sup> Historical reflection on the prophet's part <sup>2)</sup> has in this case led to the formulation of a numerical saying.

The historical duality of the Northern and the Southern Kingdoms and of their respective capitals figures prominently in Ezek. xxiii 1-35. This text is one of the 'historical' chapters in the Book of Ezekiel (i.e. xvi, xx, xxiii), which spread out before reader and hearer the prophet's comprehensive historical perspective. They show that "Ezekiel is not only a prophet but also a theologian", who by way of reasoning reflection "thinks matters through". <sup>3)</sup> To his eye Israel and Judah, Samaria and Jerusalem are both guilty (xxiii 13), just as they both had the same start in history (xxiii 2, 4, 13 b):

Son of Man, there were two women, the daughters of one mother; . . . Oholah was the name of the elder and Oholibah the name of her sister . . . Oholah is Samaria, and Oholibah is Jerusalem . . . they both took the same way.

The genre of the numerical saying serves to set the stage for the detailed and lengthy description of the aberrations of the two sisters. Prophetic reflection has fittingly employed a numerical saying to demonstrate an order discovered in history. A comparison with Jer. iii 6 ff. shows that another prophet treated the same theme without putting

<sup>1)</sup> WEISER, *op. cit.*, p. 220. Cf. Lk. xviii 10.

<sup>2)</sup> If Jer. xxiv 1-10 are of Deuteronomistic origin, as James Philip HYATT, 'Jeremiah', *J.B.* V, p. 998, maintains, the interpretation given above is not materially affected.

<sup>3)</sup> Gerhard VON RAD, *Theologie des Alien Testaments II* (München 1960), p. 236.

emphasis on the duality of Jerusalem and Samaria and hence did not use a numerical saying.

Another type of duality is central in the allegory of the sheep and the shepherd in Deutero-Zechariah (xi 4-14). This text poses many problems, so much so that it has been characterized as one of the most enigmatic sections of the Bible. <sup>1)</sup> Several themes and motifs occurring in the Old Testament have gone into the making of this passage, e.g. the historical duality of Judah and Israel, the shepherd imagery, and the covenant motif. Furthermore, the text has later been expanded through interpretative glosses. <sup>2)</sup> The passages which contain the numerical saying of the two staffs are verses 7, 10, 14:

And I took two staffs; one I named Grace, the other I named Union . . .  
And I took my staff Grace, and I broke it, annulling the covenant which I had made with all the people(s) . . . Then I broke my second staff Union, annulling the brotherhood between Judah and Israel.

It is evident that the literary basis of the allegory is a numerical saying. The two staffs may indeed be an old Canaanite religious motif, <sup>3)</sup> but here they symbolize the two relationships which were considered by the writer of Zech. xi 4-14 as basic in God's history with his people: (1) God's covenant with his people <sup>4)</sup> and (2) the unity between Judah and Israel within the God-given covenant. The historical background, according to many scholars, is the Samaritan Schism. <sup>5)</sup> Possible as this may be, the allegory may indeed view the whole of Israel's history as the arena in which this twofold break has repeatedly happened. <sup>6)</sup> Judean circles may well have considered every break-off of the North (922 B.C., 722 B.C. (?), Samaritan Schism) as being necessarily preceded by a break-off in the covenant relation between God and that part of God's people. In other words, the twofold break described Zech. xi 4-14

<sup>1)</sup> Robert C. DENTAN, 'Zechariah 9-14', *I.B.* VI, p. 1102.

<sup>2)</sup> According to Karl ELLIGER, *Das Buch der zwölf Kleinen Propheten* II, 4th ed. (Göttingen 1959), pp. 159 f., 164 f. the following passages: xi 6, 10, 15 f.

<sup>3)</sup> See DENTAN, *op. cit.*, pp. 1104.

<sup>4)</sup> The plural "with all peoples" (verse 10) is probably a later interpretative change, making the covenant refer to the Noachian covenant, so ELLIGER, *op. cit.*, p. 195, footnote 7, and P. R. ACKROYD, 'Zechariah', M. BLACK, ed. *Peake's Commentary on the Bible*, rev. ed. (London 1962), § 571 f.

<sup>5)</sup> Cf. Friedrich HORST, *Die Zwölf Kleinen Propheten - Nahum bis Maleachi*, 2nd ed. (Tübingen 1954), p. 253; ELLIGER, *op. cit.*, p. 163; Mathias DELCOR, 'Hinweise auf das samaritanische Schisma im Alten Testament', *Z.A.W.* 74 (1962), pp. 285-91; ACKROYD, *op. cit.*, § 571 g.

<sup>6)</sup> M. REHM, 'Die Hirtenallegorie Zach 11 4-14', *Biblische Zeitschrift* N.F. 4 (1960), pp. 186-208 (according to the summary of J. HEMPEL, *Z.A.W.* 73 (1961), p. 104).

is an order within Israel's history which has become evident to Deutero-Zechariah and which could be characterized thus: God's abandonment of the covenant is followed by the destruction of the people. On the other hand, the prophetic eschatological tradition in Ezek. xxxvii 15-28 emphasizes both the new covenant (21, 23, 26) and the new unity of Judah and Israel (17, 22). In Zech. xi 4-14, however, the genre of the numerical saying provided the setting for the allegory referring to the historical-theological duality of covenant and unity.<sup>1)</sup>

Historical reflection concerning *world history* underlies Dan. vii 2-7, where four empires are described under the guise of animal imagery:

Daniel said, "I saw in my vision by night, and behold, the four winds of heaven were stirring up the great sea. And four great beasts came up out of the sea, different from one another. The first was like a lion and had eagles' wings . . . a second one, like a bear . . . another, like a leopard, with four wings . . . (and) four heads . . . a fourth beast, terrible and dreadful and exceedingly strong . . ."

The identification of the four empires is a matter of scholarly dispute. Many favour the sequence Babylonia, Media, Persia, and Hellenistic Greece.<sup>2)</sup> Furthermore, it has been illustrated that this fourfold structure of world history was known in the ancient Near East before the time of the writing of the Book of Daniel and that in all likelihood this older material was used in Daniel.<sup>3)</sup> Important is the fact that this material is employed in a central place in the Book of Daniel. The basic historical contrast, as far as Dan. vii is concerned, is not that between the various world empires but the contrast between world history as a whole and God's coming kingdom. This accords well with the central position which the speculation concerning the course of world history holds in apocalyptic thought.<sup>4)</sup> The number signifies within that context the finiteness of the history of the world and points to its end and fulfilment.<sup>5)</sup> In this case the numerical value employed in the numerical saying stresses the exclusiveness of the items listed: Four empires, but not more!

<sup>1)</sup> This interpretation is not materially affected if this text refers to the Samaritan Schism only. Also in that case the duality of covenant and unity is the basic issue.

<sup>2)</sup> Arthur JEFFERY, 'Daniel', *I.B.* VI, p. 453; J. BARR, 'Daniel', M. BLACK, ed., *Peake's Commentary on the Bible*, rev. ed. (London 1962), § 524 c; cf. Martin NOTH, 'Das Geschichtsverständnis der alttestamentlichen Apokalyphtik' (1954), *Gesammelte Studien* (München 1957), p. 266.

<sup>3)</sup> See especially NOTH, *op. cit.*, pp. 257-59.

<sup>4)</sup> Cf. Dietrich RÖSSLER, *Gesetz und Geschichte. Untersuchungen zur Theologie der jüdischen Apokalyphtik und der pharisäischen Orthodoxie* (Neukirchen 1960), pp. 55-60.

<sup>5)</sup> NOTH, *op. cit.*, p. 263.

The post-exilic <sup>1)</sup> passage Is. xix 24 f. deals with the ethnic structure in the eschaton:

In that day Israel will be the third with Egypt and Assyria, a blessing in the midst of the earth, whom the LORD of hosts has blessed, saying, "Blessed be Egypt my people, and Assyria the work of my hands, and Israel my heritage."

Even though not a numerical saying *stricto sensu*, the text is the outcome of a reflection which saw that Israel had in its history been the suffering third with respect to Mesopotamia and Egypt. In the eschaton, however, it shall not be so; Israel shall be its two great neighbours' equal.

It is probably by accident that no numerical saying has survived which lists the two ages of apocalyptic thought. 4. Ezra (II Esdras) vii 50, however, comes close to such a description: "... the Most High has made not one world but two". The apocalyptic seers and theologians thought of the two ages both in local and temporal terms, as 4. Ezra iv 2; viii 1; ix 19; Syr. (II) Bar. li 8 indicate. <sup>2)</sup>

Historical reflection, which turns to the dim past and selects three exemplary and legendary figures, is found in Ezekiel's argument for individual retribution (xiv 12-20). The prophet stresses that not even Noah, Daniel, and Job, if in the country today, would have been able to rescue anything except their own lives (xiv 14, cf. 20):

... even of these three men, Noah, Daniel and Job, were in it, they would deliver but their own lives by their righteousness ...

Recent discussions of this text <sup>3)</sup> have shown that Ezekiel has consciously selected three non-Israelite heroes of righteousness in order to drive home his point that God's individual retribution knows of no exceptions. <sup>4)</sup> The grouping together of three heroes, whether Ezekiel's own achievement or not, presupposes a comprehensive reflection on great historical figures of old. In turn, this reflection serves the theological argument of the passage xiv 12-20. The prose numerical saying in which the result of this historical reflection is expressed serves to set the three heroes over against the prophet's own generation.

<sup>1)</sup> J. BRIGHT, 'Isaiah I', M. BLACK, ed., *Peake's Commentary on the Bible*, rev. ed. (London 1962), § 435 d.

<sup>2)</sup> Cf. H. SASSE, 'aiōn', *Th.W.B.N.T.* I, pp. 206 f.

<sup>3)</sup> Cf. e.g. M. NOTH, 'Noah, Daniel und Hiob in Ezechiel XIV', *V.T.* I (1951), pp. 251-60; Walther ZIMMERLI, *Ezechiel* (Neukirchen 1957 ff.), pp. 320 f.

<sup>4)</sup> NOTH, *op. cit.*, p. 259; ZIMMERLI, *op. cit.*, pp. 321 f.

The events connected with Christ's appearance on earth have led Ignatius of Antioch to formulate 'three mysteries' on the basis of theological reflection (Eph. xix 1): <sup>1)</sup>

And the virginity of Mary, and her giving birth were hidden from the Prince of this world, as was also the death of the Lord. Three mysteries of a cry which were wrought in the stillness of God.

The point seems to be that at these three occasions a cry normally makes known what is happening, but that this was not the case with Mary and Christ. Rather, he was made manifest through the appearance of a star (xix 2). Theological historical reflection of an unusual type has shaped this inverted numerical saying in prose, by grouping together Mary's virginity and Christ's birth and death as 'mysteries'.

Several numerical sayings of the Old Testament are the outcome of reflection concerning the *history of the individual*. All of these sayings presuppose a personal relationship between the individual and God as determining man's life. One example occurs in the first Eliphaz speech (Job v 19-22). This graded numerical saying occurs in a longer discourse at the end of the argument, making clear the two preceding verses which affirm that God's chastening is followed by God's healing:

He will deliver you from six troubles;  
in seven there shall no evil touch you.  
In famine he will redeem you from death,  
and in war from the power of the sword.  
You shall be hid from the scourge of the tongue,  
and shall not fear destruction when it comes.  
At destruction and famine you shall laugh,  
and shall not fear the beasts of the earth.

Verses 24-26 continue in general terms the thought of verse 17 by describing the happy life of one delivered by God. The passage is not without difficulties. 'Destruction' and 'famine' are listed twice, and hardly any one of the calamities listed fits Job's situation. <sup>2)</sup> It seems that verses 20-22 (23) are a digression from the main line of Eliphaz' argument, a digression which quotes and adapts a list of seven evils known to the author. One cannot help suspecting stylistic mannerism

<sup>1)</sup> Translation of KIRSOPP LAKE, *The Apostolic Fathers I* (London/Cambridge, Mass. 1912), p. 193.

<sup>2)</sup> Artur WEISER, *Das Buch Hiob*, 2nd ed. (Göttingen 1956), p. 53. SAUER, *op. cit.*, p. 91, finds himself unable to count *seven* evils. If in verse 22 a "destruction" and "famine" are counted separately, seven items emerge from the list. This is not to deny that the list presents some difficulties.

in this. Be that as it may, the numerical saying stands as a recapitulation of the various types of divine acts of salvation experienced collectively or individually in the history of Israel.

Some numerical sayings which originated in the reflection concerning the future of an individual are styled as prayers. One example occurs Job xiii 20 f. in Job's answer to Zophar's first speech. Job xiii 17-19 is the summons to enter legal trial. However, before Job enters this trial and advances his arguments against God he prays (xiii 20 f.):

Only grant two things to me,  
then I will not hide myself from thy face:  
withdraw thy hand far from me,  
and let not dread of thee terrify me.

A comparison with Job ix 34 shows that the two items mentioned refer to one thing only, namely, Job's sickness, but are two different aspects of that sickness: (1) as symptom of God's power over Job and (2) as the horror which is connected with a God-sent sickness. Form-critically Job xiii 20 f. is clearly of a mixed type in that a prayer is set in the form of a numerical saying. While it may have been the case in certain circles of later Hebrew Wisdom that a prayer was couched in the pattern of the numerical saying (cf. Prov. xxx 7-9; Ps. xxvii 4), the present text appears to be more of a rhetoric nature, "fashioned by a long process of development and the broad elaboration of its style".<sup>1)</sup>

A similar 'broad elaboration' may be seen in Prov. xxx 7-9:

Two things I ask of thee;  
deny them not to me before I die:  
Remove far from me falsehood and lying;  
give me neither poverty nor riches;  
feed me with the food that is needful for me,  
lest I be full, and deny thee,  
and say, "Who is the LORD?"  
or lest I be poor, and steal,  
and profane the name of my God.

The refined structure of this numerical saying is noteworthy: verse 8 a and b list one pair of extremes each, which together are considered

<sup>1)</sup> Artur WEISER, *Introduction to the Old Testament*, transl. by D. M. BARTON (London 1961), p. 292. SAUER, *op. cit.*, p. 89, is not satisfied with the text as it stands and changes the saying into a graded numerical saying. For this he must alter both the headline and add a third item. His procedure is dictated by the view that simple numerical sayings are "later" than graded numerical sayings (cf. also his treatment of Prov. xxx 24-28; *op. cit.*, pp. 108 f.).

undesirable; verse 9 takes up both 8 a and 8 b and combines them into a description of what might happen if these two undesirable things should occur. This numerical saying is of a highly reflective character, found in a section of the Book of Proverbs (xxx 1-10) which has been noted for its theological-reflective tone akin to the Book of Job.<sup>1)</sup>

Ps. xxvii 4 is a unique numerical saying in that it lists only one item:

One thing have I asked of the LORD,  
that will I seek after;  
that I may dwell in the house of the LORD  
all the days of my life,  
to behold the beauty of the LORD,  
and to inquire in his temple.

The form of Ps .xxvii is a matter of scholarly dispute, as is the question whether two originally separate psalms were combined to make up the present psalm. The suggestion must be considered that this psalm is a Levitic spiritual, that is, a composition born out of a (post-exilic?) pietistic type of Levitical spiritualizing of certain aspects of temple service.<sup>2)</sup> The numerical saying itself shows a concentration on the *one* thing needful, i.e. to be near God in his temple (cf. Ps. lxxiii 23-26; Lk. x 41 f.). This is described in a threefold<sup>3)</sup> manner: (1) participating in the temple service (at Jerusalem) for life, (2) in order to witness theophanies,<sup>4)</sup> and (3) to serve in some not clearly defined cultic function.<sup>5)</sup> These three are really one for the psalmist, the contrary being separation from God and his temple. This formulation of the one thing needful is evidently the fruit of meditation and reflection.

#### REFLECTION ON CANONICAL SCRIPTURE

Already before the destruction of the Second Temple in A.D. 70 Jewish learning had turned to the interpretation and re-interpretation

<sup>1)</sup> Otto EISSFELDT, *Einleitung in das Alte Testament*, 3rd ed. (Tübingen 1964), p. 643 f. SAUER, *op. cit.*, pp. 101 f., wishes to change also this simple numerical saying into a graded one.

<sup>2)</sup> Cf. Ps. xvi and lxxiii; also Gerhard VON RAD, *Theologie des Alten Testaments I* (München 1957), pp. 401-405.

<sup>3)</sup> Unless verse 4 b has secondarily been inserted from Ps. xxiii 6, so e.g. Hans-Joachim KRAUS, *Psalmen I* (Neukirchen 1960), p. 224.

<sup>4)</sup> Artur WEISER, *Die Psalmen*, 5th ed. (Göttingen 1959), pp. 24-27, 49 f.; KRAUS, *loc. cit.*

<sup>5)</sup> The root *bqr* apparently describes a cultic function or office, cf. Lev. xiii 36 and 2. Kings xvi 15, also the *mbqqr* in 1 QS and the Zadokite Documents ("spiritual guide, overseer", so Chaim RABIN, *The Zadokite Documents*, 2nd ed. (Oxford 1958), p. 47) and the Nabatean *mubaqqiru* ("cultic functionary, probably interpreter of sacrifice", so KRAUS, *loc. cit.*). In Ps .xxvii 4 c the term seems to be spiritualized.

of canonical Scripture. “ . . . from the second century before the Christian era, if not earlier, . . . the Scribes annexed the whole field of traditional law, and made it their business to know and to teach its rules as a distinct branch of learning . This led to a more technical formulation, and to the endeavor *to group them* in some association, *by numbers* or otherwise, in order to facilitate memorizing them”.<sup>1)</sup> MOORE rightly stresses the mnemotechnical function of such grouping. It must also be emphasized that such grouping is primarily a coordination in that like is set alongside like for easy orientation and comprehension.

A collection of almost 600 numerical sayings out of Talmud and Midrash has already been made.<sup>2)</sup> From among these 18 list two items, 237 list three items, 97 list four, 53 list five, 33 list six, 35 list seven, 6 list eight, 1 lists nine, 72 list ten, 1 lists eleven, 2 list twelve, 1 lists thirteen, 1 lists fourteen, 5 list twenty-four, 1 lists thirty-two, and 2 list forty items. The very large number of numerical sayings listing three items is understandable, the large number listing ten items is noteworthy. The number ‘ten’ does not only correspond to the ten fingers of the two hands but also to the number of the Ten Commandments. According to WÜNSCHE there also existed a Rabbinic technical term for the genre of the numerical saying.<sup>3)</sup>

Almost all Rabbinic numerical sayings are in prose. Many of them begin with the names of their authors.<sup>4)</sup> There exist smaller collections in the Talmud itself, e.g. Pirqa Aboth v. The sayings cover all areas of Rabbinic knowledge, directly or indirectly connected with Holy Scripture. Some deal with lexicography, grammar, and hermeneutics. Others are concerned with events of the history of Israel, or with anthropological and dogmatic matters. Botanical, medical, and metaphysical problems are dealt with in still other numerical sayings.

<sup>1)</sup> George Foot MOORE, *Judaism I* (Cambridge, Mass. 1927), p. 150 (italics mine).

<sup>2)</sup> August WÜNSCHE, ‘Die Zahlensprüche in Talmud und Midrasch’, *Z.D.M.G.* 65 (1911), pp. 57-100, 395-421; 66 (1912), pp. 414-459. Not all the sayings collected there are numerical sayings, e.g. the one listed *Z.D.M.G.* 65, p. 84: ‘On three days preceding the festivities of idolaters, it is forbidden to transact business with them . . . (*without* a following list)’. (Translation according to A. MISHCON/A. COHEN, ‘Abodah Zarah, in: I. EFSTEIN, ed., *The Babylonian Talmud* (London 1935), p. 1). I counted thirty-six such ‘numerical sayings’ among those that list between two and forty items. Those listed as enumerating more than forty items are not numerical sayings either because they do not actually list these items (cf. *Z.D.M.G.* 66, pp. 456-59).

<sup>3)</sup> ‘middah’, *Z.D.M.G.* 65, p. 59.

<sup>4)</sup> WÜNSCHE, *op. cit.*, passim.

The interpretation of the Law is naturally often the theme of numerical sayings.

This survey emphasizes the argument advanced by WÜNSCHE and MOORE, viz. that the genre of the numerical saying fulfilled a mnemotechnical function in the oral transmission of Rabbinic traditions. However, these numerical sayings are at the same time attempts to reduce to order the numerous and confusing data of Rabbinic learning. The genre is a mnemotechnical device precisely because it reduces, by its very nature, to a surveyable order that which it describes and summarizes.

Here it must suffice to discuss a few examples of pre-Rabbinic scriptural reflection which has resulted in the formulation of numerical sayings. In the course of the introductory historical résumé of the Zadokite Document Is. xxiv 17 is quoted and interpreted, with reference to the religious-political situation of the second century B.C., in the following manner (iv 15 - 18 a): <sup>1)</sup>

Its explanation: the three nets of Belial, about which Levi son of Jacob said that he 'catches in them the heart . . . of Israel' and has made them appear to them as three kinds of righteousness. The first is whoredom, the second is wealth, the third is conveying uncleanness to the sanctuary.

The scriptural exegesis in fact serves to summarize the three points where at that time the Essene movement was in opposition to the reigning Hasmonean priest-kings: <sup>2)</sup> (1) polygamy (iv 21 - v 6), (2) wealth unrighteously gained, i.e. from sinners and pagans (cf. 1 QpHab viii 10-12), and (3) various clearly defined disagreements concerning ritual purity in sexual matters (v 6-11). In this case scriptural reflection was guided by the desire to extract from a Biblical passage the basis for religious polemics. Is. xxiv 17 seemed well suited for this to the Essene theologians from whose hands the Zadokite Documents come. <sup>3)</sup>

Several examples of exegetical numerical sayings occur in Pirque Aboth. The text v 11 deducts from Lev. xxvi 14-22 the sevenfold punishment promised there twice (verses 18, 21): <sup>4)</sup>

<sup>1)</sup> Translation of Chaim RABIN, *The Zadokite Documents*, 2nd ed. (Oxford 1958), p. 16.

<sup>2)</sup> Werner FOERSTER, *Neutestamentliche Zeitgeschichte I. Das Judentum Palästinas zur Zeit Jesu und der Apostel*, 3rd. ed. (Hamburg 1959), p. 58.

<sup>3)</sup> For a similar enumeration of vices which is indirectly connected with the exegesis of Gen. vi 1-4 see Jub. vii 21.

<sup>4)</sup> Translation of R. TRAVERS HERFORD, *A.P.O.T.* II, p. 708.

Seven kinds of punishment come upon the world for seven main transgressions . . . (follows a list)

From the following list seven different types of transgression and their respective punishments emerge, based in a more general manner on scriptural proof-texts: (1) Famine from drought due to partial tithing, (2) famine from tumult and drought due to not tithing at all, (3) famine of extermination due to not offering the cake of dough, (4) pestilence due to capital crimes . . ., (5) sword due to injustice and incorrect teaching of the Torah, (6) wild beasts due to false swearing and profaning 'the Name', and (7) exile for false worship, incest, bloodshed . . . It is obvious that the mentioning of the number 'seven' in Lev. xxvi 18 and 21 has induced the rabbis to work out this numerical saying. There was evidently more material than could be accommodated in the seven-scheme, hence several types of transgression are lumped together under (5), (6), and (7). In any case there can be little doubt that theological reflection on Scripture has led to the formulation of this numerical saying.

The numerical saying which immediately follows (v 12) is similar in that it lists "four seasons" within the seven year cycle when "pestilence increases". This plight is due, the text affirms, to sins committed with respect to the tithe of the poor.

A sequence of numerical sayings is the section Pirque Aboth v 1-9. It lists nine (ten) sayings of 'tens' but enumerates the items only with respect to the last two:

By ten sayings the world was created . . .  
 Ten generations from Adam to Noah . . .  
 Ten generations from Noah to Abraham . . .  
 Ten trials Abraham our father was tried with . . .  
 Ten wonders were done to our fathers in Egypt,  
 and ten by the sea.  
 [Ten plagues did the Holy One . . . bring upon the Egyptians . . .]  
 Ten trials did our fathers try God with in the wilderness . . .  
 Ten wonders were done in the Sanctuary (follows a list)  
 Ten things were created 'between the suns' (follows a list).

This collection of numerical sayings is a good illustration for the statement of MOORE, quoted above, to the effect that Rabbinic learning "led . . . to the endeavor to group them (i.e. the data of Rabbinic learning) in some association, by numbers or otherwise. . .".<sup>1)</sup> The

<sup>1)</sup> MOORE, *op. cit.*, p. 150.

first seven groups of tens are not followed by enumerations, probably because these were generally known or could easily be ascertained from Holy Scripture. The last numerical saying is especially interesting because in it the attempt is made to project the origin of things important in the later history of Israel back into the account of creation. The text of the saying shows furthermore that this matter was still open to discussion (v 9): <sup>1)</sup>

Ten things were created 'between the suns'. And these are they: The mouth of the earth; the mouth of the well; the mouth of the ass of Moses; and the *shamir*-worm; and the writing; and the writing; and the Tables. Some say, also the evil spirits, and the grave of Moses, and the ram of Abraham our father; and some say also the tongs that are made with tongs.

A passage such as this one amply illustrates the scholarly reflection which led to the framing of exegetical numerical sayings.

A simpler numerical saying is that attributed to Rabbi Simeon (b. Johai), <sup>2)</sup> which refers to the 'crown', i.e. the symbol of supreme excellence, to be gained in various chief callings (iv 17): <sup>3)</sup>

There are three crowns: the crown of Torah, the crown of priesthood and the crown of royalty; but the crown of a good name mounts above them.

The concept of the crown is Biblical (cf. Prov. iv 9; Lev. viii 9), as is the importance of the good name (Prov. xxii 1; Eccles. vii 1, also Pirque Aboth ii 2 end). The rabbis' reflection on the crowns led to the grouping together of three crowns, climactically superseded by a fourth crown, i.e. the good name.

The sixth chapter of Pirque Aboth, a later appendix (the Chapter of Rabbi Meir, or, the Acquisition of the Torah), contains a listing of the five possessions of God (vi 11): <sup>4)</sup>

Five possessions has the Holy One, blessed be he, acquired in this world, and these are they: Torah is one possession; heaven and earth are one possession; Abraham is one possession; Israel is one possession; the house of the sanctuary is one possession. Whence is this proved concerning . . . ? (follow Scriptural proof-texts for each 'possession')

<sup>1)</sup> Translation of R. TRAVERS HERFORD, *A.P.O.T.* II, p. 708, where also a commentary is given.

<sup>2)</sup> This is probably the same rabbi as the one mentioned Pirque Aboth iii 5, so HERFORD, *A.P.O.T.* II, p. 705.

<sup>3)</sup> Translation of HERFORD, *loc. cit.*

<sup>4)</sup> Translation of HERFORD, *op. cit.*, p. 713.

How much the theme of God's 'possessions' was reflected upon in Rabbinic circles is illustrated by the fact that "in Siphri 134 a, three possessions are mentioned: Torah, Israel, and the Sanctuary. In Mechilta, Beshallah 9, p. 43 a, b four are given: Israel, heaven and earth, the Sanctuary, and Torah. In the Talmud, Pes. 87 b, the same four are given."<sup>1)</sup> The numerical element in this as in the other numerical sayings served as a safeguard against additions to the listings, not always effectively, as is seen from the parallel listings in other Rabbinic sources.

It should be noted that several of the exegetical-theological numerical sayings discussed in this section start from a given premise and attempt to justify it through Scripture quotations. St. Paul proceeds in this manner when he discusses the two covenants (Gal. iv 22-27): from their historical existence he goes back to Holy Scripture and finds a suitable supporting text in the Ishmael-Isaac tradition. He contrasts Sarah and her (later) free-born son Isaac with Hagar and her (earlier) slave-born Ishmael and goes on (iv 24, 26):

Now this is an allegory: these women are two covenants. One is from Mount Sinai, bearing children for slavery; she is Hagar . . . But the Jerusalem above is free, and she is our mother.

In this case the apocalyptic-dualistic concept of two covenants is deduced in Rabbinic allegorical fashion from the two wives of Abraham. St. Paul wished to prove that there is not only one covenant, the one of Mount Sinai, as the Jews believed, but two. Hence the numerical element has taken on great importance because Paul's argument is built on the twofold covenant scheme.

This section is fittingly concluded with a numerical saying that sets forth the seven principles of Rabbinic Scripture interpretation according to Hillel the Elder (Tosephta Sanhedrin 7.11):<sup>2)</sup>

Hillel the Elder expounded seven principles before the elders of Petherah: a *minori ad maius*, analogy, a standard conclusion based on one passage (of Scripture), a standard conclusion based on two passages, general and particular—particular and general, analogy with another passage, proof from the context.

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<sup>1)</sup> HERFORD, *loc. cit.*

<sup>2)</sup> Translation according to that given by C. K. BARRETT, ed., *The New Testament Background: Selected Documents* (New York 1961; Harper Torchbook), p. 146, where references are found also to the thirteen exegetical principles of R. Ishmael (died circa A. D. 135) and to the thirty-two principles of R. Eliezer b. R. Jose the Galilean (end of the second century A. D.).

These seven principles were later expanded to thirteen and ascribed to R. Ishmael. They became so important for Rabbinic Scripture interpretation that every orthodox Jew said them every morning in his devotions. <sup>1)</sup> The summary of the fourfold meaning of Holy Scripture, current in the later Middle Ages, is a parallel: <sup>2)</sup>

Littera gesta docet, quid credas allegoria,  
Moralis quid agas, quo tendas anagogia.

In both instances the listings are the outcome of scholarly reflection in an age to which a voluminous heritage had been entrusted and which did its best to preserve and to order it .

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<sup>1)</sup> Emil SCHÜRER, *A History of the Jewish People in the Time of Jesus Christ*, 2nd Division I (New York n.d.), p. 337.

<sup>2)</sup> Quoted by Robert M. GRANT, *The Bible in the Church* (New York 1948), p. 101.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### HORTATIVE NUMERICAL SAYINGS

#### LEGAL REQUIREMENTS

Hortative numerical sayings are framed in order to regulate human behaviour. Hence the verbforms employed refer to the future either directly or by implication. The list of the numerical saying describes certain actions expected of the persons addressed, and the numerical element defines the frequency or the extent of such actions.

The passage Ex. xxi 7-11 is concerned with the sphere of common or civil law, more exactly, with slave law (10 f.):

If he (scil. a man who has married a slave girl) takes another wife to himself, he shall not diminish her food, her clothing, or her marital rights. And if he does not do these three things for her, she shall go out for nothing, without payment of money.

The setting of this inverted numerical saying in prose is the law concerning the sale of an Israelite young and unmarried woman. She can either become the wife of her new master (xxi 8) or of his son (xxi 9). However, if her new master first takes her as his wife and then marries a second wife (10 a), he shall treat her (the first wife) as before by supplying the three things befitting a married woman: food, clothing, and conjugal rights (10 b). If he does not do these three things, she shall become free (11).

This numerical saying is imbedded in a legal context, summarizing the standard requirements demanded of a husband with respect to his wife. <sup>1)</sup> In what form the summary of these requirements may have been current is hard to say; suffice it to state that a list of standard (or minimum ?) requirements such as these must have been known generally <sup>2)</sup> and must have served a regulative function for the gui-

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<sup>1)</sup> So also Martin NOTH, *Das zweite Buch Mose - Exodus* (Göttingen 1959), p. 144. - J. Coert RYLAARSDAM, 'Exodus', *I.B.* 1, p. 996, argues that verse 11 refers to the three ways in which a householder may dispose of a girl he purchases: (1) marry her, (2) let somebody else marry her, (3) let his son marry her. However, this interpretation does not do justice to the phrase "then he shall let her be redeemed" in verse 8.

<sup>2)</sup> Since the terms employed in the original text are rare in Biblical Hebrew and since two of them are attested in Ugaritic (*kst* 'garment, covering', cf. Cyrus H. GORDON, *Ugaritic Manual* (Rome 1955), glossary no. 947, and *ʾr* 'flesh, meat', cf.

dance of both husband and wife and of the judges who may have been called upon to give judgment in such matters. Similar numerical sayings, but with direct reference to the covenant relationship between God and Israel, will be discussed below in the section dealing with covenant stipulations.

#### RITUAL REQUIREMENTS

Ancient Israel celebrated annually three agricultural festivals. The Book of the Covenant (Ex. xx 22 - xxiii 33) contains a numerical saying concerning these feasts (Ex. xxiii 14-16):

Three times in the year you shall keep a feast to me. You shall keep the feast of unleavened bread; . . . You shall keep the feast of harvest, . . . You shall keep the feast of ingathering at the end of the year . . .

This numerical saying lists the pilgrimage festivals only. They are distinguished from appointed festivals such as sabbath or new moon, and are grouped together because they entail pilgrimages with their accompanying special circumstances. They are obligatory and are the occasion for visiting that shrine which is nearest or otherwise suited for the Israelite concerned.

The numerical saying Ex. xxiii 14-16 is part of the Book of the Covenant. There can be little doubt that it was originally a separate unit of oral tradition, much like the other materials contained in the Book of the Covenant. Attention has rightly been drawn to the terseness of the formulation,<sup>1)</sup> a feature to be expected in a ritual text. Jussive verbforms, characteristic of many a hortative numerical saying, appear both in the title-line and in the list. The three members of the list are structured similarly, except that in verse 15 a digression expressly connects the feast of unleavened bread with the deliverance from Egypt. Otherwise the saying is set in the precise and succinct prose of a ritual text. The numerical element defines the annual minimum requirements of pilgrimages, or possibly, if these originally Canaanite feasts were connected with revelries and fertility rites, a maximum concession: thrice but not more shall Israel celebrate such festivals. In any case, the numerical value defines the frequency of certain requirements and hence is constitutive for this type of numeri-

G. R. DRIVER, *Canaanite Myths and Legends* (Edinburgh 1956), p. 151), the possibility must be considered that the grouping of the three standard or minimum requirements is Canaanite and was current in Palestine already before the settlement of the Israelite tribes.

<sup>1)</sup> J. COERT RYLAARSDAM, 'Exodus', *I.B.I.*, p. 1013.

cal saying. The provisions in this summary "serve as reminders rather than as instruction".<sup>1)</sup> Indeed, one may characterize this text as catechetical, that is, setting forth shortly basic cultic requirements in an easily remembered form. In this the numerical value may also serve as a memory help, even though one doubts whether the mnemotechnical element plays a major role in Ex. xxiii 14-16.

Ex. xxxiv 22 f. is parallel to xxiii 14-16 but does not state that *these* three festivals are to be celebrated. The injunction that all males should appear before God three times annually may or may not refer to these three feasts. Deut. xvi 16, however, is not ambiguous:

Three times a year all your males shall appear before the LORD your God at the place which he will choose: at the feast of unleavened bread, at the feast of weeks, and at the feast of booths . . .

The Deuteronomic preacher-theologians have retained the threefold festival cycle, but made the feasts secondary to the injunction to undertake annually three pilgrimages to the one legitimate holy place in Israel—a change in good Deuteronomic fashion! Deut. xvi 16 itself sums up the preceding discussion of the three feasts (xvi 1-15), and must be considered as catechetical in character.

Recent form-critical examinations of the P-stratum of the Pentateuch have shown that this material, especially in Ex. xxv - Lev. xvi, is based to a large extent on orally transmitted priestly rituals.<sup>2)</sup> "Each ritual was made up of a number of short sentences, each containing three to four phrases, which . . . were combined to series of three, five, ten, twelve, and once even thirty sentences. (Where these common numerical values, important for mnemotechnical reasons, do not appear (scil. in the reconstructions presented), a sentence is probably no more recognizable to the research student and must be considered as missing.) . . . Their fixed and monotonous diction suggests that these rituals were handed down orally, even to (the time of) P . . .".<sup>3)</sup> None of the reconstructed rituals appears in the form of a numerical saying; it is nevertheless noteworthy that according to this form-critical investigation certain ritual injunctions were joined together so as to make up numerically defined units of priestly oral traditions.

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<sup>1)</sup> RYLAARSDAM, *loc. cit.*

<sup>2)</sup> Rolf RENDTORFF, *Die Gesetze in der Priesterschrift* (Göttingen 1954); Klaus KOCH, *Die Priesterschrift von Exodus 25 bis Leviticus 16* (Göttingen 1959).

<sup>3)</sup> KOCH, *op. cit.*, pp. 96 f. The bracketed sentence appears there as a footnote.

A ritual numerical saying occurs already in the Ugaritic Baal and Anath cycle. In the context of this numerical saying Baal, as son of El still a young god and in the process of gaining rank and power in the Ugaritic pantheon, is described as trying to acquire a palace. <sup>1)</sup> In the course of his attempts he was, apparently at a banquet of the gods, insulted either by all the gods or by the god Mot alone. Baal protests with the words (II AB, iii 14-20): <sup>2)</sup>

“*Ab[omination]* has been placed upon my table,  
 Filth in the cup I drink.  
 For two [kinds of] banquets Baal hates,  
 Three the Rider of the Clouds:  
 A banquet of shamefulness,  
 A banquet of baseness,  
 And a banquet of handmaids’ *lewdness*.  
 Yet herein is flagrant shamefulness,  
 And herein is handmaids’ *lewdness*.”

After this protest Baal and Anath go away in order to approach Ashe-rat, the mothergoddess and consort of El, and to request her to intercede for Baal before El.

In the direct speech of Baal (iii 14-22) one expects, since Baal is speaking concerning himself, that the 1. person is used. This is indeed the case in iii 14-16, but lines 17-22 change to the 3. person singular. Lines 21 f., on the other hand, refer only to *two* types of sacrifices mentioned in iii 17-21. Furthermore, the reference to sacrifices in iii 17-21 is not consistent with the contents of lines 14-16 <sup>3)</sup> nor with the supposed feast of the gods <sup>4)</sup>. The uneven literary structure of iii 14-21(22) and the inner inconsistency of the passage suggest that iii 17-21, that is, the numerical saying, was originally an independent tradition. When it found its place in its present context, it was already a fixed oral tradition which could no more be changed when incorpo-

<sup>1)</sup> The episode is summarized and discussed in detail by Umberto CASSUTO, ‘The Palace of Baal’, *J.B.L.* LXI (1942), pp. 51-56; Theodor H. GASTER, ‘A King Without A Palace’, *B.A.S.O.R.* 101 (Feb. 1946), pp. 21-30. SAUER, *op. cit.*, pp. 64 f., discusses this numerical saying all too shortly. Our interpretation differs notably from his.

<sup>2)</sup> C. H. GORDON, *Ugaritic Manual* (Rome 1955), Text 51, iii 14-22 (p. 140). Translation of H. L. GINSBERG, *A.N.E.T.*, p. 132 c. Line 19 contains the phrase “and a sacrifice” twice, obviously a dittography. The square-bracketed word is GINSBERG’s restoration of a lacuna, the italicized word is not altogether certain.

<sup>3)</sup> What exactly have the “abomination” and the “filth” to do with these three types of sacrifices?

<sup>4)</sup> How can Baal speak of sacrifices in reference to that which other *gods* have done to him by way of insult?

rated into a new context. From this observation one must conclude that in Ugarit the genre of the ritual numerical saying existed when the Baal and Anath cycle grew in oral tradition.

The fact that this numerical saying lists three types of unacceptable sacrifices indicates that the tradition belonged to the sphere of the cult. And since it summarizes in a simple and easily remembered manner undesirable ritual practices, it must have had a regulative function in the Ugaritic Baal cult. The use made of the numerical saying in the present context suggests this, too: Baal rejects insults levelled at him by other gods with the quotation of this text. Lines 14-16 would of themselves have been sufficient to repudiate his accusers; the incorporation of the numerical saying into its present context <sup>1)</sup> was meant to lend additional support to his protests. At the same time the new setting of the numerical saying supplied its aetiology: Baal himself had first uttered it!

The meaning of the three phrases rendered "shamefulness", "base-ness", and "handmaids' lewdness" is not clear. If the numerical saying indeed lists three undesirable sacrifices, the three terms referring to them can hardly be abstract words. They are very probably cultic technical terms. The first type of sacrifice possibly refers to idolatrous ritual acts (from the point of view of the Ugaritic Baal cult), because the Hebrew root *bwsh* is found, especially in prophetic texts, with reference to idolatry, more exactly, with reference to the breaking away from Yahweh's covenant. <sup>2)</sup> The second type of sacrifice may refer to sacrifices of fornication, that is, paid out of the hire of a (secular ?) harlot because (1) Ugaritic *dnt* is equivalent to Hebrew *zenûth* and because (2) the Deuteronomic laws seem to prohibit a similar practice when they decree that "you shall not bring the hire of a harlot (*ethnan zônâb*) or the wages of a dog (scil. sodomite) into the house of the LORD your God in payment for any vow; for both of these are an abomination to the LORD your God (Deut. xxiii 19; R.S.V.: 18). <sup>3)</sup> The third type of sacrifice may refer to certain prohi-

<sup>1)</sup> John GRAY, *The Legacy of Canaan* (Leiden 1957), p. 91, points out with reference to another Ugaritic literary cycle, that "in process of development many elements, perhaps having nothing originally to do with the main theme, have become incorporated" (scil. into Ugaritic literary compositions).

<sup>2)</sup> Cf. Hos. x 6; Is. i 28 f.; Mic. iii 7; Zeph. iii 11; Jer. vi 14 f., viii 12, xxxi 19; Is. xlii 17, xliiv 9; lxv 13.

<sup>3)</sup> For Ugaritic *d* = Hebrew *z*, see G. R. DRIVER, *Canaanite Myths and Legends* (Edinburgh 1956), p. 128; for the Ugaritic ending *-t* conceivably = Hebrew abstract noun ending *-uth*, see GORDON, *op. cit.*, § 8:51 (p. 51).

bited kinds of sexual licentiousness in connection with women serving at feasts, because Ugaritic *tdmm* is possibly related to Hebrew *zīm-māb*,<sup>1)</sup> which in turn suggests abominable carnal relationships.<sup>2)</sup>

In conclusion it can be said that the Ugaritic numerical saying here discussed had a regulative function in the Baal cult in ancient Ugarit. It must have been handed down in priestly circles. With the quotation of this catechetical text the ritual acceptability of certain sacrifices was decided.

#### COVENANT STIPULATIONS

Yahweh's covenant with Israel is one of the central themes of the Old Testament. Recent investigations into the ancient Near Eastern and especially Hittite background of the covenant ideology have shown that the formulation of covenant stipulations and their imposition by one partner upon the other are integral parts of covenant initiation.<sup>3)</sup> As far as the Old Testament concept of the covenant between Yahweh and Israel is concerned, the pattern of the decalogue or dodecalogue turns out to be one of the outstanding formulations of the covenant stipulations. They were used whenever and wherever the covenant was solemnly renewed. "The Ten Commandments would have provided an exceptionally fine summary of the covenant stipulations suitable for these ceremonies of covenant renewal."<sup>4)</sup> Therefore the decalogue Ex. xx 2-17 / Deut. v 6-21 must be understood as a general and summary formulation of the covenant stipulations, while other similar series, e.g. Deut. xxvii 15-26, may have served as stipulations with reference to specific spheres of human behaviour.

The (do-)decalogues are not numerical sayings as far as their outward form is concerned. If a title-line at all appears, it does not contain a numerical element. Ex. xxxiv 28, Deut. iv 13 and x 4, however, indicate that the numerical element was commonly considered constitutive, certainly in the case of Ex. xx 2-17/Deut. v 6-21. As might be expected, the decalogue *par excellence*, Ex. xx 2-17, has received

<sup>1)</sup> The *t-* of the Ugaritic word is a prefix, see GORDON, *op. cit.*, § 8:43 (p. 50), while for Ugaritic *d* = Hebrew *z* see the preceding footnote.

<sup>2)</sup> Cf. Lev. xviii 17, xx 14; Judg. xx 6; Amos ii 7 c; Ezek. xxii 11.

<sup>3)</sup> George E. MENDENHALL, *Law and Covenant in Israel and the Ancient Near East* (Pittsburgh 1955), pp. 33 f., and the same author's article 'Covenant', *I.D.B.* I, pp. 714 f., 719 f.

<sup>4)</sup> W. J. HARRELSON, 'Ten Commandments', *I.D.B.* IV, p. 572; cf. MENDENHALL, *I.D.B.* I, pp. 719 f.

much scholarly attention. <sup>1)</sup> Scholars are agreed that its present form contains secondary additions. Originally the decalogue may have had the following form: <sup>2)</sup>

I am Yahweh, thy God.

- (1) You shall not have any other gods besides me.
- (2) You shall not make for yourself an idol.
- (3) You shall not use the name of your God in vain.
- (4) Remember the sabbath day.
- (5) Honour father and mother.
- (6) You shall not kill.
- (7) You shall not commit adultery.
- (8) You shall not steal.
- (9) You shall not act as false witness against your neighbour.
- (10) You shall not covet the house of your neighbour.

It has been noted that the decalogue is "a collection of fundamental demands, both religious and ethical". <sup>3)</sup> It is obvious that in it the attempt is made to cover as comprehensively as possible all spheres of life under the covenant. The employment, in (6) and (8), of transitive verbforms without a direct object may illustrate this. <sup>4)</sup> The stipulations, true to their covenant-formular background, are set in the terse prose of legal texts.

Concerning the setting in life of the decalogue it has been argued that the covenant renewal festival, celebrated every seventh year at the Feast of Booths, witnessed the recital of the covenant stipulations in the form of decalogues. <sup>5)</sup> It is in any case clear "that the decalogue and other formulations of apodictic law early assumed a central position in Israelite life. They had their setting in life in the Feast (of

<sup>1)</sup> For a comprehensive discussion of recent research see Johann Jakob STAMM, *Der Dekalog im Lichte der neueren Forschung*, 2nd ed. (Bern/Stuttgart 1962).

<sup>2)</sup> Following the reconstruction by J. J. STAMM, 'Dekalog', *Biblich-Historisches Handwörterbuch I* (Göttingen 1962), col. 331. Cf. HARRELSON, *op. cit.*, p. 570; James MULLENBURG, 'The History of the Religion of Israel', *I.B. I*, p. 303.

<sup>3)</sup> Artur WEISER, *Introduction to the Old Testament*, transl. by D. M. BARTON (London 1961), p. 120. Cf. also W. EICHRÖDT, *Theologie des Alten Testaments I*, 6th ed. (Stuttgart/Göttingen 1959), pp. 36 f.: "Beim Dekalog wird diese zentrale Gottbezogenheit nicht nur darin deutlich, das gleich die ersten Gebote die Pflichten gegen Gott umschreiben, sondern vielleicht noch mehr in der Auswahl und Zusammenstellung gerade dieser 10 Gebote aus dem weiten Gebiet der pietas und probitas. Gerade diese klare Konzentration auf die unentbehrlichen Grundlagen der religiösen Volksordnung bedeutet eine geistige Leistung, die im alten Orient nicht ihresgleichen hat . . ."

<sup>4)</sup> Albrecht ALT, 'Die Ursprünge des israelitischen Rechts' (1934), *Kleine Schriften I*, p. 321.

<sup>5)</sup> Cf. Deut. xxxi 9-13; ALT, *op. cit.*, pp. 326-28.

Booths) and were, in connection with the review of the Sinai events, the documents which set forth the binding declaration of the will of the divine covenant partner".<sup>1)</sup> This leads to the observation that the setting in life of the decalogue, as described above, necessarily gave to the decalogue a catechetical function. The numerical element 'ten' serves as a help for 'learning and doing the commandments', i.e. the Ten Commandments, important especially for the Deuteronomic preacher-theologians (cf. Deut. iv 13 f.)<sup>2)</sup> Hence the decalogues may be compared to laymen's catechisms.<sup>3)</sup> In this connection one scholar suggested that the genre of the decalogue is a "medium unit", that is, a composite oral and literary tradition which, form-critically speaking, stands between the indivisible smallest unit and a greater collection.<sup>4)</sup> This certainly is a correct observation and it is in this respect that decalogues can be characterized as of "a comparatively young type".<sup>5)</sup>

On the basis of the foregoing considerations it is evident that the decalogues are the outcome of theological reflection which is directed toward guiding Israel as a whole and in its individual members in the life under the covenant. The decalogue "owes its existence to the desire to mark out the whole range of Yahweh's will . . . in the shortest possible manner".<sup>6)</sup> The number 'ten' offered itself as that numerical value which, next to 'twelve', was most commonly used as a larger, round number, corresponding to the number of fingers of the human hand.<sup>7)</sup> If one considers that "the content of the Decalogue was not so different from the customary law of the pagan nations of antiquity",<sup>8)</sup> the numerical coordination of fundamental demands of the Yahweh-Israel covenant must be considered a significant accomplishment of Israelite theological reflection.

<sup>1)</sup> J. J. STAMM, *Der Dekalog im Lichte der neueren Forschung*, 2nd ed., p. 31.

<sup>2)</sup> WEISER, *loc. cit.*; similarly Martin NOTH, *Das zweite Buch Mose - Exodus* (Göttingen 1959), pp. 129 f.

<sup>3)</sup> Aage BENTZEN, *Introduction to the Old Testament I*, 5th ed. (Copenhagen 1959), p. 221.

<sup>4)</sup> Gunnar HYLMÖ, according to BENTZEN, *op. cit.*, p. 222.

<sup>5)</sup> BENTZEN, *loc. cit.*; WEISER, *loc. cit.*- Theophile James MEEK, *Hebrew Origins* (New York 1960; Harper Torchbook), p. 38, ignores the careful reflection behind the formulation of the decalogue when he characterizes it as "a purely mechanical arrangement that smacks of artificiality".

<sup>6)</sup> Gerhard von RAD, *Theologie des Alten Testaments I* (München 1957), p. 192.

<sup>7)</sup> Friedrich HAUCK, 'deka', *Th.W.B.N.T.* II, pp. 35 f.; ALT, *op. cit.*, p. 318, discusses the possibility that the present decalogue may have contained originally twelve injunctions.

<sup>8)</sup> MENDENHALL, *op. cit.*, p. 720 (*I.D.B.* I).

It is an open question whether another decalogue can be reconstructed from Ex. xxxiv 14-26. <sup>1)</sup> Deut. xxvii 15-26, however, clearly is a dodecalogue, listing eleven abominable actions, with a twelfth injunction presenting a summary reference to the eleven preceding ones, and possibly inserted to make up a series of twelve stipulations. <sup>2)</sup> "All . . . are brief, terse, of similar form, and easily memorized." The series is one of the remains of "a large number of short legal catechisms composed for pedagogical purposes." <sup>3)</sup> As far as the principle of selection is concerned, it seems that actions committed 'in secret' were listed, <sup>4)</sup> because the injunctions refer to this explicitly in two cases (xxvii 15, 24) and implicitly in several others (xxvii 17, 18, 25). The number 'twelve' is significant because it may have been employed in conscious correspondence to the number of the tribes of Israel.

It is possible that there are still other (do-)decalogues that have gone into the making of the Old Testament, for instance Lev. xviii 7-17, where through eleven, or possibly twelve, injunctions sexual intercourse with persons of various degrees of kinship is prohibited. <sup>5)</sup> In this connection mention must again be made of the numerically defined rituals underlying P in Ex. xxv - Lev. xvi, discussed above.

In conclusion the setting in life of the (do-)decalogues can be described with these words: "... it seems that when the people came together for regularly recurring cultic purposes at the sanctuary of the covenant, the priest recited a proclamation of the divine will summarized in general terms . . . This is the place for the sacred recital . . . of a brief compilation of regulations and lists of prohibitions collected in groups of ten or twelve commandments, partly for the purpose of impressing them on the memory . . . By their content which deals with sacral, ethical and legal relationships in life, they show the close connection between the cult of Yahweh, the nationhood and the law . . .". <sup>6)</sup> Thus, in the light of the arguments presented above,

<sup>1)</sup> NOTH, *op. cit.*, p. 216, and OTTO EISSFELDT, *Einleitung in das Alte Testament*, 3rd ed. (Tübingen 1964), p. 94, are fairly certain that this is possible, while ALT, *op. cit.*, p. 317, footnote 1, considers it a "sekundäres Mischgebilde".

<sup>2)</sup> So ALT, *op. cit.*, p. 313.

<sup>3)</sup> G. ERNEST WRIGHT, 'Deuteronomy', *I.B.* II, p. 492.

<sup>4)</sup> So ALT, *op. cit.*, p. 314.

<sup>5)</sup> ALT, *op. cit.*, p. 315. For a reconstruction of another series of probably twelve injunctions from Ex. xxi 12, 15-17, xxii 18 f. xxxi 14 f., Lev. xx 2, 9-13, 15 f., 27 xxiv 16, xxvii 29 see ALT, *op. cit.*, pp. 310-12. EISSFELDT, *op. cit.*, pp. 282 and 744, points out that a series of ten injunctions underlies Neh. x 31-40 (*R.S.V.* 30-39).

<sup>6)</sup> WEISER, *op. cit.*, p. 51; cf. EISSFELDT, *op. cit.*, p. 282.

there can be little doubt that the (do-)cedalogues are hortative numerical sayings which, being the outcome of theological reflection, were designed to guide the life of Israel under the covenant.

As one might expect, numerical sayings summarizing covenant stipulations are comparatively rare outside the immediate sphere of the covenant ideology. The stipulations set forth in door liturgies and similar texts (Ps. xv 2-5; xxiv 4; Is. xxxiii 15; Mic. vi 8; Zech. viii 16 f.) are not formulated as numerical sayings. In the Book of Proverbs, however, a hortatory numerical saying occurs (vi 16-19):

There are six things which the LORD hates,  
seven which are an abomination to him:  
haughty eyes, a lying tongue,  
and hands that shed innocent blood,  
a heart that devises wicked plans,  
feet that make haste to run to evil,  
a false witness who breathes out lies,  
and a man who sows discord among brothers.

This numerical saying is remarkable in more than one way. Its title-line exhibits not only synonymous parallelism with the numerical sequence  $x/x+1$ , but also resembles the title-line of the Ugaritic numerical saying, discussed above. The list enumerates seven sins, the first five being connected with one organ of the body respectively (eye, tongue, hand, heart, feet)<sup>1)</sup> and all reflecting a prophetic concept of 'abomination'. The artistically arranged poetry of this text suggests that the numerical saying was carefully framed, possibly with reference to Prov. xxvi 25:

When he (the hater) speaks graciously, believe him not, for there are seven abominations in his heart, . . .

The Book of Proverbs in particular and the Old Testament generally refer to various undesirable cultic, ritual, moral, and ethical practices as 'abomination'.<sup>2)</sup> The abominations listed here are selected in order to mark out the ethically evil man. Therefore this numerical saying can be characterized as fulfilling a catechetical function in that it describes actions odious to Yahweh and hence not in accord with the

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<sup>1)</sup> The tradition may have contained originally only the first five items, not only because the last two are not connected with a member of the body but also because they more or less repeat two of the preceding points (cf. 19 a with 17a β, and 19 b with 18 a). For the whole numerical saying cf. the short references by SAUER, *op. cit.*, pp. 91, 114.

<sup>2)</sup> Cf. M. H. LOVELACE, 'Abomination', *I.D.B.* I, pp. 12 f.

covenant relationship. It is a prophetic-sagacious "Beichtspiegel",<sup>1)</sup> that is, a confessional with the help of which the individual Israelite could examine himself.<sup>2)</sup>

Christ's summary of the Law (Mk. xii 29-31, Mt. xxii 37-40, Lk. x 27 f.), as formulation of the basic stipulations of the New Covenant, corresponds to the decalogue Ex. xx 2-17 par. which is the formulation of the stipulations of the Old Covenant. The analogy goes further: As in the Old Testament not all covenant stipulations were formulated as numerical sayings, so also in the New Testament. There only Matthew offers a summary which is couched in the form of the (inverted) numerical saying:

And he (Jesus) said to him, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it, You shall love your neighbour as yourself. On these two commandments depend all the law and the prophets."

The juxta-position of the two commandments from the Old Testament (Deut. vi 5 and Lev. xix 18) as central to Israel's faith occurs already in the intertestamental Testament of Dan (v 3) and the Testament of Issachar (v 2), but there it is not set in the pattern of the numerical saying. In the light of Mk. xii 29-31 and its Lukan parallel one can hardly ascribe the summary of the Law according to Matthew to Christ himself. It rather seems that the formulation of the summary in the pattern of the inverted numerical saying is due to Matthew or 'the School of Matthew'. This would accord with the contention that "this (Matthew's) rootage in Judaism may well be epitomised in the suggestion that the Gospel grew out of a 'school' led by a converted rabbi . . . where Jewish methods of teaching and studying were applied to the new cause".<sup>3)</sup> In this case Rabbinic scholarly reflection, now serving the Christian cause, has resulted in the Matthean summary of the Law in a fashion more concise and 'theological' than in the

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<sup>1)</sup> For a discussion of this pattern see Kurt GALLING, 'Der Beichtspiegel. Eine gattungsgeschichtliche Studie', *Z.A.W.* 47 (1929), pp. 125-30; cf. also WEISER, *op. cit.*, p. 52.

<sup>2)</sup> In this connection Prov. xvii 15 and xx 10 can be mentioned as short, two membered prophetic-sagacious numerical sayings where title-line and list are fused into a single sentence. These two sayings refer to justifying the wicked (and its opposite) and to the use of diverse weights and measures respectively, as abominations to the Lord.

<sup>3)</sup> K. STENDAHL, 'Matthew', M. BLACK, ed., *Peake's Commentary on the Bible*, rev. ed. (London 1962), § 673 g.

case of the two Synoptic parallels. Thus the *two* basic commandments of the new constituency of Israel as the Church (according to Matthew) both summarize and supplant the *ten* commandments of the old constituency as Israel.<sup>1)</sup> The various attempts of Jewish scholars to summarize the Law in 613 (or smaller numbers of) precepts are the result of a similar scholarly-reflective approach to the demands of the covenant.

#### COUNSELS OF WISDOM

The example of a hortative numerical saying now to be discussed was formulated by ancient Israelite sages. In Prov. xxii 22 - xxiv 22 a lengthy list of thirty precepts is found, preceded by an introduction in xxii 17-21. Soon after the ancient Egyptian wisdom book of Amenemope became known in 1923,<sup>2)</sup> it was evident that Prov. xxii 20 refers to thirty precepts, because the obscure Hebrew *shlshym* (xxii 20) makes good sense when, following the lead of the Egyptian wisdom book, it is read as *shlwsbm*. The thirty injunctions are found in the compilation of wisdom sayings in xxii 22 - xxiv 22. The whole composition, commonly characterized as one of the collections which make up the Book of Proverbs, is thus a long numerical saying. The title-line is xxii 17-21 and the list xxii 22 - xxiv 22. In the following quotation a part of the title-line and a summary description of the themes treated are given:<sup>3)</sup>

Incline your ear, and hear the words of the wise . . . (xxii 17 a)  
 I have made them known to you today, even to you. (xxii 19 b)  
 Have I not written for you thirty sayings of admonition and knowledge,  
 (xxii 20)  
 to show you what is right and true,  
 that you may give a true answer to those who sent you? (xxii 21)

- (1) Oppression of the poor (xxii 22 f.)
- (2) Association with a wrathful man (xxii 24 f.)

<sup>1)</sup> Cf. STENDAHL, *loc. cit.* Also Philo Judaeus speaks of "two topmost principles, the one (directed) to God through godly fear and piety, the other to men in philanthropy and righteousness" (De. Septen.), quoted by Alfred PLUMMER, *An Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel according to St. Matthew* (London n.d.), p. 309.

<sup>2)</sup> Published by E. A. W. BUDGE, *Facsimiles of Egyptian Hieratic Papyri in the British Museum*. Second Series (London 1923). For literature see *A.N.E.T.*, p. 421 b.

<sup>3)</sup> In a few cases the delineation of the different units is not entirely certain. It seems, however, that the compiler intended to enumerate and to discuss *thirty* topics.

- (3) Avoidance of pledges (xxii 26 f.)
- (4) Removal of landmarks (xxii 28)
- (5) Acquisition of secretarial skill (xxii 29)
- (6) Manners at table (xxiii 1-3)
- (7) Transiency of wealth (xxiii 4 f.)
- (8) The calculating host (xxiii 6-8)
- (9) Silence in a fool's presence (xxiii 9)
- (10) Landmarks and orphans' fields (xxiii 10 f.)
- (11) Necessity of instruction (xxiii 12)
- (12) Discipline of children (xxiii 13 f.)
- (13) Delight in wisdom (xxiii 15 f.)
- (14) Envy of sinners versus fear of God (xxiii 17 f.)
- (15) Drunkenness and gluttony (xxiii 19-21)
- (16) Respect for parents (xxiii 22 (+23 ?))
- (17) Joy of successful parents (xxiii 24 f.)
- (18) Dangers of association with harlots (xxiii 26-28)
- (19) Dangers of drunkenness (xxiii 29-35)
- (20) Association with evil men (xxiv 1 f.)
- (21) Wisdom and house building (xxiv 3 f.)
- (22) Wisdom versus strength (xxiv 5f. )
- (23) Wisdom versus foolishness in the gate (xxiv 7)
- (24) Scheming of mischief makers (xxiv 8 f.)
- (25) Helpfulness in times of need (xxiv 10-12)
- (26) Advantage of acquiring wisdom (xxiv 13 f.)
- (27) Lying in wait (xxiv 15 f.)
- (28) Rejoicing at the enemy's fall (xxiv 17 f.)
- (29) Seeming success of evil-doers (xxiv 19 f.)
- (30) Fear of God and king (xxiv 21 f.)

From an examination of the form of the individual units and from a comparison of xxii 22 - xxiii 11 with the corresponding sections of the Teaching of Amenemope<sup>1)</sup> it is evident that the author drew on already existing material. This is only natural if he was a teacher. Furthermore, xxii 21 suggests that the pupil had to memorize his teacher's 'convenient summary under thirty headings' in order to be immediately able to give account "to those who sent him", i.e. his parents or, according to the LXX, people questioning him for advice.<sup>2)</sup> Hence the composition xxii 17 - xxiv 22 must be described as a hortatory numerical saying, functioning as a summary of wisdom precepts for quick recital and application. The pupils probably belonged to the educated classes of ancient Israel, and would later serve in responsible

<sup>1)</sup> For a synopsis cf. e.g. Jack FINEGAN, *Light from the Ancient Past*, 2nd ed. (Princeton 1959), pp. 124 f.; *A.N.E.T.*, p. 424, footnote 46.

<sup>2)</sup> Crawford H. TOY, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Proverbs* (New York 1904), p. 424.

positions in the administration of the state or become sages and educators.

As has already been indicated, the idea of summarizing the themes of sages under thirty headings was very likely taken over from the ancient Egyptian Teaching of Amenemope. Known only since 1923, this compilation of wisdom maxims has thrown much light on Prov. xxii 22 - xxiii 11, as a comparison of the two collections will indicate. The Teaching of Amenemope originated at the end of the Eighteenth or at the beginning of the Nineteenth Dynasty (circa 1300 B.C.)<sup>1)</sup> and sets forth in thirty chapters "the foremost of all books",<sup>2)</sup> that is, an epitome of the material offered in wisdom traditions and considered important at that time for one reason or another. The composition is fairly long. It seems that the thirtieth chapter is both item no. 30 and the title-line, even though it comes at the end of the compilation, referring as it does to "these thirty chapters". There also exists an introduction.<sup>3)</sup> It has been observed that no parallel of such a numerical arrangement has so far been found among ancient Egyptian wisdom texts and that therefore one must conclude that the author consciously invented the numerical scheme and that "order and division of the material are, in any case, the well-planned accomplishment of a single man".<sup>4)</sup> That may well be the case, but one must also recognize, on the other hand, that a numerical arrangement in the form of the numerical saying offers itself to the reflecting mind, especially that of the teacher, as a convenient summary and teaching help.

Democritus of Abdera (circa 460-370 B.C.) formulated a numerical saying in prose which, by implication, is hortatory in character:<sup>5)</sup>

Of practical wisdom these are the three fruits: to deliberate well, to speak to the point, to do what is right.

This saying sets side by side the three aims of practical wisdom, thus reminding both teacher and pupil of the purpose of their endeavours.

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<sup>1)</sup> So J. M. PLUMLEY, 'The Teaching of Amenemope', D. WINTON THOMAS, ed., *Documents from Old Testament Times* (New York 1961; Harper Torchbook), pp. 173 f., in the light of new evidence discussed there.

<sup>2)</sup> Translation of both PLUMLEY, *op. cit.*, p. 185, and John A. WILSON, *A.N.E.T.*, p. 424 c.

<sup>3)</sup> For translation of excerpts see PLUMLEY, *op. cit.*, pp. 175-85; WILSON, *op. cit.*, pp. 421-24.

<sup>4)</sup> Albrecht ALT, 'Zur literarischen Analyse der Weisheit des Amenemope', *V.T.S.* III (1955), pp. 17 f.

<sup>5)</sup> Fragment no. 2 (DIELS). Translation as quoted by T. V. SMITH, ed., *From Thales to Plato* (Chicago 1956/57; Phoenix Books), p. 40.

Like other aphorisms of the early Greek philosophers, this numerical saying betrays its origin in philosophic reflection.

The Mishnah-tractate Pirqe Aboth, the most wisdom-like of the tractates of the Mishnah, contains a number of numerical sayings, many of which have been discussed. Three numerical sayings can be characterized as hortatory. The first occurs at the beginning of the tractate where it is said, with reference to the men of the Great Synagogue (according to Rabbinic tradition a permanent council founded by Ezra): <sup>1)</sup>

They said three things: Be deliberate in judgement; and raise up many disciples; and make a fence for the Torah. (i 1 b)

This prose saying summarizes the main concerns of early Rabbinism. The judgment of criminal and civil law cases, which was the responsibility of the Rabbis, required utmost care, caution, and patience, both as far as the people and as far as the law itself was concerned. The raising up of disciples, i.e. Rabbinic scholars and teachers, was necessary for assuring a central place for the Torah. Making a fence for the Torah refers "to precautions by which a man might be guarded from transgression before it was too late". <sup>2)</sup> From these precautions sprang the body of oral law which later crystallized into the Mishnah.

Quite different is a numerical saying ascribed to "Rabbi", that is, Rabbi Judah haNasi (died A.D. 219), the last and chief compiler of the Mishnah. Several sayings attributed to him are found in ii 1; evidently arranged according to catchword association. The last saying in ii 1 is a hortative numerical saying concerning sin: <sup>3)</sup>

And keep in view three things, and thou wilt not come into the clutches of sin; know what is above thee, an eye that sees and an ear that hears, and all thy deeds written in a book.

It is not clear how the three items are to be counted; probably they are God's seeing eye, his hearing ear, and the book of record. <sup>4)</sup> In other words, nothing can remain hidden from God and nothing will be forgotten by God. One cannot say that this is a lofty ethical statement, but it undoubtedly impressed itself in the desired manner on the hearers of Rabbi Judah.

<sup>1)</sup> Translation of R. TRAVERS HERFORD, *A.P.O.T.* II, p. 691.

<sup>2)</sup> HERFORD, *loc. cit.*

<sup>3)</sup> Translation of HERFORD, *op. cit.*, pp. 694 f.

<sup>4)</sup> So HERFORD, *op. cit.*, p. 695, and Herbert DANBY, transl., *The Mishnah* (London 1933), p. 447.

The same topic of the avoidance of sin is the theme of another hortative numerical saying (Pirqe Aboth iii 1):<sup>1)</sup>

Akabia b. Mahalalel said: Keep in view three things, and thou wilt not come into the clutches of sin;— Know whence thou comest; and whither thou goest, and before whom thou art to give account. Know whence thou comest,—from a fetid drop; and whither thou goest,—to the place of dust, worm, and maggot; and before whom thou art to give strict account;— before the King of the Kings of the Kings, the Holy One, blessed be He.

The dates of Akabia are not certain; he was not a rabbi, as the missing title 'Rabbi' (before his name) indicates. Excommunicated by his colleagues,<sup>2)</sup> he died under the ban. The burden of the argument in this prose numerical saying is that man will shun sin if only he remembers the humility of both his origin and of his destiny and the fact that he will have to stand before God's judgment seat.

The parenetical theme of the 'Two Ways', recurring not rarely in Jewish-Christian literature, has several times been summarized with the help of the genre of the numerical saying. The best known example is found Didache i-v. It has long been recognized<sup>3)</sup> that Jer. xxi 8, Deut. xxx 15, and Ps. i 6 provide the Old Testament background of this theme.<sup>4)</sup> The earliest explicit reference to the Two Ways occurs Test. Asher i 3-5<sup>5)</sup> where the Two Ways which "God has given to the sons of men" are introduced as indication of the thorough-going ethical dualism in this world: There are two ways, two inclinations, two modes of action. "Therefore all things are by twos, one over against the other" (i 4).<sup>6)</sup> It appears, however, that at that time the Two Ways theme was not yet set in the developing Jewish proselyte catechism as a specially parenetical theme.<sup>7)</sup>

The topic appears again in Ethiopic Enoch xci 18 f. but there it is not

<sup>1)</sup> Translation of HERFORD, *op. cit.*, p. 698.

<sup>2)</sup> HERFORD, *loc. cit.*

<sup>3)</sup> N. FORBES/R. H. CHARLES, '2 Enoch' (Slav. Enoch), *A.P.O.T.* II, p. 449 (note to xxx 15).

<sup>4)</sup> W. MICHAELIS, 'hodos', *Th.W.B.N.T.* V (1954), pp. 43-46, discusses the question as to whether Prodikus fable of Heracles at the two ways (XENOPHON, *Memorabilia* 2, 1, 21-24) is a classical Greek forerunner of the Jewish-Christian Two Way topic.

<sup>5)</sup> MICHAELIS, *op. cit.*, p. 58.

<sup>6)</sup> Translation of FORBES/CHARLES, *op. cit.*, pp. 449 f.

<sup>7)</sup> MICHAELIS, *loc. cit.*

set in the pattern of the numerical saying. In the Secrets of Enoch (Slavonic Enoch) xxx 14f., however, the Two Ways are explicitly set forth: <sup>1)</sup>

I called his name Adam, and showed him the two ways, the light and the darkness, and I told him: 'This is good and that bad', that I should learn whether he has love towards me, or hatred, that it be clear which in his race love me.

Here emphasis is apparently put on the implied assertion that the Two Ways are as old as creation, quite contrary to Gen. ii, and hence are fundamental in all men's lives as indicators as to whether a man loves God or hates him.

Didache i-v has employed the Two Ways scheme as frame for the opening section: <sup>2)</sup>

There are two ways, one of life and one of death, and there is a great difference between the two ways. The way of life is this: (follows i 2 - iv 14). This is the way of life. But the way of death is this: (follows v). May you be delivered, my children, from all these.

The extensive parenetical material, gleaned mostly from the New Testament, is held together by the Two Way scheme. Here as in the parallel passage Barnabas xviii-xx, an ethical dualism, based on the older Jewish Two Way theme, <sup>3)</sup> has found its precise formulation through the pattern of the numerical saying. This corresponds to the reflective use of the genre which summarizes dualistic philosophical themes, discussed above. Did. i-v is thus an illustration of the usefulness of the pattern of the numerical saying for setting forth catechetical-hortatory material. <sup>4)</sup> Later Christian references to this topic <sup>5)</sup> indicate that it remained a vehicle of ethical instruction of influence for some time.

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<sup>1)</sup> Translation of FORBES/CHARLES, *loc. cit.*

<sup>2)</sup> Translation of Edgar J. GOODSPEED, *The Apostolic Fathers* (New York 1950), pp. 11-14.

<sup>3)</sup> Cf. also Hermas, Mandates vi, 1.

<sup>4)</sup> For a detailed discussion of the Two Way theme in the Apostolic Fathers, see MICHAELIS, *op. cit.*, pp. 98-100.

<sup>5)</sup> Cf. FORBES/CHARLES, *op. cit.*, p. 449 (note to xxx 15), where references to later ecclesiastical writers are given.

## CONCLUSION

The examples of numerical sayings discussed in the second chapter occur in epic or narrative compositions. In most cases they are imbedded in their respective contexts, originating with the context and forming an integral part thereof. It should be noted that the verbforms used in the title-line refer expressly or implicitly to the past. This is equally natural, because the number offers itself to the narrator without special reflection. In all cases items of concrete character, such as persons or cities, are listed. Their groupings are obvious and need only be described in the form of numerical sayings. The purpose of listing them is to supply information which is necessary for the story told. Hence the numerical sayings employed in this manner are means to an end and not an end in themselves. If they were the only examples of the pattern of the numerical saying found in the Old Testament, they could not even be designated a literary pattern but would have to be considered simply a convenient figure of speech. However, they share certain characteristics with the other two types of the pattern as found in the Old Testament and elsewhere, hence their discussion is included in this study.

The representative selection of numerical sayings presented in the third chapter has shown that the reflective use of this pattern was widespread. Numerical sayings of this type could occur either imbedded in prose or poetry contexts or by themselves as independent literary units in their own right. As for the verbs employed, they appear either in a present tense form or imply this. This is to be expected because the reflective numerical saying is formulated in order to describe succinctly an order thought to *exist* in the observed phenomena. In this the reflective usage differs clearly from the narrative use of the genre, where the verb usually appears in the past tense.

The numerical value appearing in this use of the pattern is very important because it systematizes into a numerically defined listing the objects of reflection. There are four incomprehensible things (Prov. xxx 18 f.), not five or two! There are three things that remain, not four (1. Cor. xiii 13)! The number is both aim and achievement of the reflection that led to the formulation of the numerical saying. In some cases favourite numbers, such as 'seven', 'ten' or 'twelve', may influence the reflection and indeed suggest the numerical value appearing

in the saying, but there seems to be no clear indication of this in the numerical saying nor of speculations concerning mystic or symbolic meanings of certain numbers.

The basic function of the reflective numerical saying is the coordination of the objects of reflection into a comprehensible list, defined with reference to its content through the common element of the items listed and with reference to its extent through the numerical value. Such counting and ordering, as has been pointed out above, is one of the ways in which the human mind orders the phenomena of the world into an understandable pattern and so masters them. It is a kind of simple philosophy, found in various cultures, such as the ancient Near Eastern, the classical Greek, and the ancient Indian.

As might be expected, the reflection is not limited in its scope. All fields of human activity can become its object. Nature as that which most immediately concerns man figures prominently in this respect. Society is often the object of reflection, as is the phenomenon of man himself. Theological reflection is not rare, even though the particular character of a certain religion may set limits to reflection in one way or another. Reflection concerning history appears especially among those peoples for whom the historical dimension of life is important, notably ancient Israel. Reflections on a given body of sacred traditions play a decisive and normative role where such sacred traditions are highly treasured and carefully transmitted from one generation to the next, for instance in Rabbinic circles.

In all these cases it is evident that the will to master certain phenomena of life inspires both the reflection and the formulation of its results in an easily comprehended manner. The function of the reflective numerical saying is to provide a pattern for such formulation. Hence the numerical sayings discussed in this chapter must be viewed as outcome of this type of reflection. The greater the mass of phenomena to be ordered and mastered, the more numerical sayings appear. The great number of numerical sayings in Rabbinic lore and learning illustrates this.

The question as to the relation of this genre to the pattern of the riddle calls for comment. Some scholars, e.g. TORCZYNER, have argued that the numerical saying developed out of the genre of the riddle. This cannot be maintained in the light of the evidence presented above. The riddle has a playful and entertaining note, its setting in life is public entertainment at feasts (cf. Judg. xiv 10 ff.). The numerical saying, on the other hand, exhibits a more serious, philosophical

approach, often dealing with very fundamental matters. Basically the riddle aims at entertainment, the numerical saying at mastery of life and world.

This does not mean that riddle and numerical saying have nothing to do with each other. Both are born out of the recognition that one does not know but wishes to know. Both suppose a question and both call for an answer. But there can be little doubt that the reflection leading to the formulation of numerical sayings is more serious and comprehensive than that lying behind the riddle. Furthermore, riddles are usually concerned with one matter only while the reflection leading to the formulation of reflective numerical sayings is concerned with the coordination of several items. The riddle aims at a solution which is based on that one item, the reflective numerical saying views several items together and in parallel and aims at coordination.

The suggestion has been made by SAUER that the pattern of the graded numerical saying developed in North-Canaanite literature out of the numerical sequence.<sup>1)</sup> There can be no doubt that the headline of the graded numerical saying has stylistic affinities to the numerical sequence, even though the present writer prefers not to speak of "development". Stylistic figures of speech can be used in different settings without being necessarily dependent upon each other!

DORNSEIFF, in a discussion of the ancient Near Eastern literary pattern of the 'Priamel', i.e. a series of examples assembled to prove a point, characterizes this pattern as "nahestehend" (related)<sup>2)</sup> to the pattern of the numerical saying. HEMPEL mentions the connection in style between numerical saying and example-sequence as a problem but does not enter into a discussion of it<sup>3)</sup>

A typical example-sequence is Amos iii 3-6, where the prophet lists seven analogous cases in order to lead up to his main point:

Do two walk together,  
 unless they have made an appointment?  
 Does a lion roar in the forest,  
 when he has no prey?  
 Does a young lion cry out from his den,  
 if he has taken nothing?

<sup>1)</sup> *op. cit.*, pp. 64 f.; cf. 89, footnote 6; 117f.

<sup>2)</sup> Frans DORNSEIFF, 'Das altorientalische Priamel' (1935), in: *Antike und Alter Orient. Interpretationen*, 2nd ed. (Leipzig 1959), pp. 391.

<sup>3)</sup> Joh. HEMPEL, 'Pathos und Humor in der israelitischen Erziehung', *Von Ugarit nach Qumran*, EISSFELDT Festschrift (B.Z.A.W. 77; Berlin 1958), p. 73, footnote 23.

Does a bird fall in a snare on the earth,  
 when there is no trap for it?  
 Does a snare spring up from the ground,  
 when it has taken nothing?  
 Is a trumpet blown in a city,  
 and the people are not afraid?  
 Does evil befall a city,  
 unless the LORD has done it?

These questions, which are all to be answered in the negative, lead up to that which Amos wishes to assert unequivocally: his being commissioned by God to speak (iii 8 b):

The Lord GOD has spoken,  
 who can but prophesy?

Just as there exists a cause and effect relationship in all that happens, so is there a cause and effect in Amos' prophetic preaching. The seven rhetorical questions affirm, each in its own way, this cause and effect relationship.

Amos iii 3 ff. may serve as a convenient basis for a discussion of the relationship between the pattern of the "Priamel" and the genre of the reflective numerical saying.<sup>1)</sup> It is obvious that both genres are concerned with parallel or analogous things or cases. In both patterns that which is the common factor of the items is crucial. With this the agreement ends. In the case of the example-sequence the principle to be illustrated is already fixed and known; the examples which are adduced are secondary to it and could be increased or decreased at will. In the reflective numerical saying, however, that which is common to the items listed is a characteristic feature of these particular items only. Furthermore, in almost all cases they could not be increased or decreased at will. The numerical value is not a matter of chance as in the example-sequence. There a numerical value, as a rule, does not appear at all. The number in the reflective numerical saying, however, is constitutive for the saying because it is the outcome of reflection. The example sequence is framed to illustrate a given principle, the reflective numerical saying aims at ordering and comprehending various phenomena of life which have resisted comprehension. Thus it must be concluded that a similarity in style and in underlying reflect-

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<sup>1)</sup> Other example-sequences in the Old Testament are Amos iv 6-12, Job viii 11-13, xxviii 1-21. Ancient Greek parallels are discussed by DORNSEIFF, *op. cit.*, pp. 389 f.

ion indeed exists, but that the functions and the intentions of the two patterns are different.

The hortative numerical saying is closely related to the reflective usage of the pattern. Hortative numerical sayings come into being when reflection is directed toward human behaviour with the desire to regulate it through a fixed number of requirements. As expected, in this case the numerical value is of great importance because it gives a directive concerning the number of the desired actions. The verbforms are expressly or by implication hortatory and hence refer to the future. This distinguishes the hortative usage from the narrative and the reflective numerical sayings. The list of the third type enumerates desirable or undesirable actions or behaviours, as the case may be, or refers to occasions when certain actions are expected or forbidden.

The most important examples of this usage of the genre in the Old Testament are the (do-)decalogues. They are, however, not the only examples. Within the context of legal decisions, of cult, of the covenant ideology, and of the wisdom teachers, hortatory numerical sayings were formulated. In all these spheres they are employed in order to outline shortly and clearly desirable or undesirable human actions, and are thus catechetical in character.

The following synoptic table summarizes the characteristic features of each of the three distinct usages of the genre of the numerical saying:

Narrative Use	Reflective Use	Hortative Use
integral part of the context	separable from the context	usually independent of the context
effortless formulation	formulation achieved by philosophical reflection	formulation achieved by ethical reflection
concrete items, self-evident	abstract items, not self-evident	desirable actions, not self-evident
number given in history/nature	number gained in reflection	number gained in reflection, mnemonic-technical
past verbforms	present verbforms	future verbforms
informative	philosophical	ethical

In the light of the results of this study the assertion of STUMMER <sup>1)</sup> and of RANSTON <sup>2)</sup> to the effect that the Biblical genre of the numerical saying is, at least in the Old Testament, an "artificial and young" pattern, cannot be upheld. As for TORCZYNER's and KÖHLER's argument, which suggests that the pattern of the numerical saying developed out of the riddle, <sup>3)</sup> the foregoing investigation has shown that this too cannot be upheld. It is true, on the other hand, that a questioning and reflecting attitude of the human mind is the background out of which both genres come into being. Function and intention of the of the two patterns are clearly different. HEMPEL's observation that numerical sayings were used, especially when they contained references to animals, as a teaching device for imparting knowledge to poor and unwilling students, <sup>4)</sup> touches only upon one aspect of the pattern, namely, its easy comprehensibility. STEVENSON's argument <sup>5)</sup> is similar in that it stresses the importance of the numerical saying as a teaching device, especially when the title-line contains the numerical sequence  $x/x+1$ . <sup>6)</sup>

The suggestion which was first made by ALT <sup>7)</sup> and later adopted by other scholars, to the effect that the numerical sayings of the collection Prov. xxx 15-31 are formulations of early Hebrew nature wisdom of encyclopaedic character, proves to be acceptable in the light of the study presented above. The numerical sayings of Prov. xxx 15-31 must be understood as examples of the reflective use of the pattern. ALT has thus not only presented an illuminating interpretation of Prov. xxx 15-31, but has opened the way for the appreciation of the genre of the numerical saying as a whole.

The pattern can best be characterized as a frame pattern, i.e. a pattern which frames several items into a coordinated whole. Its

<sup>1)</sup> Friedrich STUMMER, *Der kritische Wert der altaramäischen Ahiqartexte aus Elephantine* (Münster i.W. 1914), pp. 58 f., 85 f.

<sup>2)</sup> Harry RANSTON, *The Old Testament Wisdom Books and Their Teaching* (London 1930), p. 57.

<sup>3)</sup> Harry TORCZYNER, 'The Riddle in the Bible', *H.U.C.A.* I (1924), pp. 135 f.; Ludwig KÖHLER, *Hebrew Man*, transl. by P. R. ACKROYD (London 1956), p. 105.

<sup>4)</sup> HEMPEL, *op. cit.*, p. 73.

<sup>5)</sup> W. B. STEVENSON, 'A Mnemonic Use of Numbers in Proverbs and Ben Sira', *Glasgow University Oriental Society, Transactions* IX (1938/39), ed. by C. J. MULLO WEIR (Glasgow 1941), p. 30.

<sup>6)</sup> See Wolfgang M. W. ROTH, 'The Numerical Sequence  $x/x+1$  in the Old Testament', *V.T.* XII (1962), pp. 300-11, for a discussion of the peculiar sequence as an example of Semitic poetic parallelism, when occurring in parallel stichs.

<sup>7)</sup> Albrecht ALT, 'Die Weisheit Salomos' (1951), *Kleine Schriften* II, pp. 90-99. Cf. SAUER, *op. cit.*, p. 116.

setting in life are those situations in human life when elementary items of information, knowledge, or ethics are to be grouped together as of equal importance. Broadly speaking it can be said that whenever human reflection is at work by way of ordering and classifying, the pattern of the numerical saying offers itself as that genre which most readily and adequately fixes the results of such reflection. Hence the pattern is basically a philosophic-didactic genre; philosophic, in that it is the outcome of a simple form of philosophy, attempting to understand and to master life and world, didactic, in that such formulation is meaningful only if it aims at framing and fixing once for all the results of reflection, to be retained in oral or literary tradition.

The people in ancient Israel among whom reflective and hortative numerical sayings originated and were transmitted, were the wise men and the priests, i.e. the guardians of secular and sacred traditions. With reference to the priesthood it has been observed that it had great importance for the national life because the priests were the ones who clarified and systematized the religious heritage of the nation and who shaped the people's conduct accordingly. <sup>1)</sup> The Priestly source of the Pentateuch is a good example. On the other hand, the sages created and transmitted their own traditions which had grown out of their "seeking and searching out by wisdom all that is done under heaven" (Eccles i 13). The reflective numerical saying was more at home with the wise, the hortatory use of the genre is found both with the wise and the priests.

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<sup>1)</sup> W. EICHRODT, *Theologie des Alten Testaments* I, 6th ed. (Stuttgart/Göttingen 1959), p. 272.

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