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Occasional remarks on the psalm titles

Psalms 120-134 (the “Songs of Ascent”) are a literary unit which include at least three psalms assigned to David (Pss 122, 124, 131, 133 [although the NRSV removes reference to David in this psalm]) and one assigned to Solomon (Ps 127). Psalm 132 mentions David by name and concerns the dynastic nature of the Davidic monarchy). Thus as a unit, these 15 psalms may provide interesting data on the subject.

Psalm 133 is very short— only three verses— but a delightful literary gem in terms of its numerical composition.

At first glance, the evidence appears to support Labuschagne’s position in that the “Compositional Formula” with the remarkable “arithmological center” works only with the removal of the 3-word heading. But, looking more closely, the number 17 emerges twice at key points in the matter of “unfolding” this 11-word center— and these numbers appear only if the heading is included.

These two numbers would change to 14 [= numerical value of the name David], if the heading were removed.

Thus in this psalm, and similarly in the other psalms of this series, we find support for the position of John Wheeler that the headings must be considered integral parts of the psalms from the outset. The composer/arranger is working with both the inclusion and the exclusion of the “heading” in the numerical composition of each individual psalm from the beginning.

This is not an “editorial” process in the manner that scholars have been taught in modern times.

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