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**Epistle of Jude: Artful composition
with Fibonacci proportions**

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When one measures the length of the New Testament writings with the ancient *stichos* measure, with the line of 15 syllables, Jude belongs to the four small writings with less than 100 *stichoi*. 2 and 3 John each number 34,¹ Philemon 48, and Jude 78 *stichoi*.

1. *Content outline*

The letter, although quite small and rather inconspicuous, is an elaborate ring composition. The beginning of the letter (vv. 1-2) consists of a concise, general, i.e. “catholic” address: “to those who are called, who are beloved in God the Father and kept safe for Jesus Christ”. This is matched at the end, instead of greetings, by a solemn doxology (vv. 24-25).

The letter’s corpus between these has three parts.² The first (vv. 3-4) and the third (vv. 17-23) correspond formally by the repeated salutation ἀγαπητοί (v. 3 / vv. 17, 20) and in content in that they are explicitly paraenesis, intended as an exhortation to contend for the faith (v. 3) and containing a series of imperatives (vv. 17-23). The latter can be divided into three paragraphs: the exhortation to remember the apostles’ words predicting the appearance of false teachers (vv. 17-19), the exhortation to keep themselves in the love of God (vv. 20-21), and the exhortation to have mercy on others (vv. 22-23).

¹ Both letters are virtually of equal length, with exactly 32:11 and 32:09 *stichoi*, but the beginning of 3 John 1-4 with 8:02 is to be rounded up to 9 *stichoi*, so the whole letter is thus 35 *stichoi* long – unless one deletes γάρ in v. 3 (with ⚭ 5. 33. 81. 642. 1735. 2344. 1 vg co) and tolerates a 16th syllable at the end of the paragraph. – Cf. F.G. Lang, “Disposition und Zeilenzahl im 2. und 3. Johannesbrief”, *BZ* 59 (2015) 54–78, here 56 n. 6, 70 n. 58.

² Cf. H.-J. Klauck, *Die antike Briefliteratur und das Neue Testament* (UTB 2022; Paderborn, 1998) 260; J. Frey, *Der Brief des Judas und der zweite Brief des Petrus* (ThHK 15/2; Leipzig, 2015) 16–17 (although Frey still takes vv. 17-19 into the middle part). – Differently, for example, U. Schnelle, *Einleitung in das Neue Testament* (UTB 1830; Göttingen, 9th ed. 2017) 497: vv. 3-4 as “Anlass und Thema”, but still to the “Briefanfang” and not to the “Briefkorpus” (though corresponding with vv. 17-23); similarly, H. Paulsen, *Der zweite Petrusbrief und der Judasbrief* (KEK 12/2; Göttingen, 1992) 54; T.K. Heckel, *Die Briefe des Jakobus, Petrus, Johannes und Judas* (NTD 10; Göttingen, 2019) 263.

The central part is polemic against false teachers (vv. 5-16) and consists of five paragraphs. Of these, the first and last paragraphs contain reminders of judgments from history (vv. 5-7: time in the desert, fall of the angels, and Sodom and Gomorrah) and from the apocryphal Book of Enoch (vv. 14-16).³ In the three middle paragraphs the application to false teachers (ὁμοίως) is made, first by comparison with Sodom and Gomorrah (vv. 8-9), then with Cain, Balaam, and Korah (vv. 10-11), and finally by severe reproaches about their presence (vv. 12-13).⁴ The fact that woe is pronounced upon them in the central paragraph (v. 11) is likely the result of deliberate design.

2. *Stichometric analysis*

The three central polemical paragraphs (vv. 8-13), when each paragraph is rounded up to full *stichoi*, have together $7 + 6 + 8 = 21$ *stichoi* (exactly: 7:00 + 5:08 + 7:06). The list of judgements that frame them (vv. 5-7, 14-16) are together just as large at $11 + 10 = 21$ *stichoi* (exactly: 10:11 + 9:12), so the polemical section count is $2 \times 21 = 42$ *stichoi*.

The two paraenetic parts before and after (vv. 3-4, 17-23) have 9 and $7 + 6 + 4 = 17$, together 26 *stichoi* (exactly: 8:09 and 6:09 + 5:03 + 3:07). This sum is to be resolved as 2×13 , that is, the number of the Fibonacci sequence next to 21, and two times. The whole letter corpus then gives $2 \times (13 + 21) = 2 \times 34 = 68$ *stichoi*. Letter beginning and conclusion (vv. 1-2, 24-25) correspond to this result with numbers from the beginning of the Fibonacci series: $4 + 6 = 10$ *stichoi*, thus $2 \times 2 + 2 \times 3 = 2 \times 5$ *stichoi* (exactly: 3:14 + 6:01). This stichometric result confirms the content structure and in particular the ring composition we presupposed.

At the end of the letter, however, the exact number is for once to be rounded off, or in other words, in the last line a 16th syllable is to be tolerated. Whether the author, who with high probability paid attention to the *stichoi* numbers, wrote a text shorter by at least one syllable,⁵ miscounted at this point, or allowed himself an inaccuracy, is a different question. In any case, according to this analysis the whole letter has $68 + 10 = 78$ or 6×13 *stichoi*.

3. *Comparison with other New Testament writings*

It is interesting that the letter to Philemon with $48 = 6 \times 8$ *stichoi* is in a ratio of 8 : 13 to the letter of Jude, i.e. in a golden ratio. The author of Jude was hardly aware of this, perhaps he did not even know the letter to Philemon, which is considered to be a genuine epistle of Paul. The same ratio 8 : 13 also exists

³ For the exact source of the Enoch quote, cf. A. Vögtle, *Der Judasbrief. Der zweite Petrusbrief* (EKK 22; Solothurn / Neukirchen-Vluyn, 1994) 71–77.

⁴ Deviating from the UBS edition, an additional paragraph is set before vv. 10, 12, 20, 22.

⁵ The textual tradition offers several possibilities for this, but none of them is sufficiently likely to be original; cf. the text-critical apparatus of Nestle-Aland²⁸ (2012).

between Mark's and Matthew's Gospels. One measures $48 \times 34 = 1632$, the other $78 \times 34 = 2652$ *stichoi*. Again, it is questionable whether Matthew, as the later author, was aware of this relation. It seems more likely that the early Christian authors as well as the ancient authors in general used the Fibonacci sequence when they structured their writings and then, with a certain probability came up with comparable solutions. The stichometric analysis of Jude, which reveals such connections, thus confirms the presupposed procedure with the 15-syllable *stichos* and the Fibonacci numbers.

Appendix: Outline of the Epistle of Jude

Jude		<i>Sti- choi</i>
Verses	Parts Content	
1-2	0. Beginning: Jude to the Called	4
3-4	1. Purpose of letter: Paraenesis in fight against intruding false teachers	9
5-16	2. Polemics: Against libertine false teachers	42
5-7	2.1 <i>Scriptural references: God's judgment in the desert, fall of angels, Sodom</i>	11
8-13	2.2 <i>Conclusion: God's judgment of damnation on false teachers</i>	21
8-9	2.21 Application: Comparison with Michael's fight against the devil	7
10-11	2.22 Judgment: Woe to blasphemers of the likes of Cain, Balaam and Korah	6
12-13	2.23 Disqualification: False teachers as dangerous deceivers without substance	8
14-16	2.3 <i>Enoch quote: Prediction of judgment upon the false teachers</i>	10
17-23	3. Paraenesis: Clear distinction from the false teachers	17
17-19	3.1 Reminder: Apostle quote with prediction of false teachers	7
20-21	3.2 Admonition I: Preserve faith, love of God, and expectation for the future	6
22-23	3.3 Exhortation II: Mercy for the endangered, renunciation of false teachers	4
24-25	4. Conclusion: Solemn doxology	6
1-25	0.-4. Letter of Jude: Paraenesis and polemic in fight against false teachers	78