SHORT NOTE

THE TESTAMENT OF DAVID:
A RESPONSE TO W.T. KOOPMANS

1. Introduction

In his article, “The Testament of David in 1 Kings ii 1-10”, VT 41 (1991), pp. 429-49, W.T. Koopmans argued that David’s final words were couched in the form of verse. He tried to demonstrate the poetic nature of the Testament in its present form, including vv. 3-4 which are usually regarded as Deuteronomistic. According to Koopmans the Testament was composed in a concentric strophic structure with several parallelisms between vv. 2-4 and 5-9 (p. 443, section 4.4). This result led him to the conclusion that the present form of the text (including vv. 2-4) “seems to purposely correlate the content of the two sub-cantos” (p. 446). Although he did not deny the possibility of a Dtr. redaction—he even held this possibility explicitly open (p. 446.)—his way of questioning the present state of research on this pericope tended in the direction of a negation of this redaction (pp. 429-30, 445). Also his conclusion that “1 Kings ii 1-10 is a carefully constructed poetic narrative” (p. 445) is a point of view which differs sharply from what is normally held in earlier studies of the Testament.

Koopmans analysed the poetic structure of the “Testament of David” according to a method developed by P. van der Lugt, J.C. de Moor, and others. From a methodical point of view, however, Koopmans’s study demands critical evaluation. For this reason we will discuss his analysis of the poetic structure of vv. 8-10 and 1-2 first, an analysis which is of crucial importance to the macrostructure of the Testament. Secondly, we will consider his treatment of v. 4 as two strophes, a treatment we believe to be questionable.

2. The Delimitation of the Poetic Structure

According to Koopmans’s delimitation of the text v. 8 forms a strophe of three verse-lines. In the method employed, however, it is a rule that in strophes of more than two verse-lines the indicatores of separation must be found in the first and final verse-line only. If an enclosed verse-line yet contains a marker of separation, this
has to be taken as a contra-indication which is acceptable only if it is neutralized by a strong external parallelism between the first and the final verse-line.

However, in our case we recognize several strong markers of separation in the second verse-line (v. 8b): the use of the personal pronoun whw\(^3\),\(^4\) the emphatic position of the subject whw\(^3\),\(^5\) and finally, the repetition of the root qll.\(^6\) Although it is usual to discuss contra-indications,\(^7\) Koopmans neither indicated them nor put forward adequate arguments to neutralize them. In our opinion they render it impossible to regard v. 8 as one strophe. It seems obligatory to read vv. 8a and 8b as one strophe, and v. 8c as the beginning of the next one. So the delimitation of strophes, compared to the analysis by Koopmans, would be as follows:\(^8\)

Koopmans  
(8A) whnh ʿmk  
(8B) šm\(^3\)y bn-gr\(^3\)  
(8C) bn-hymnyn mbhrym  
(8A) whw\(^3\) qllny qllh nmršt  
(8B) bywm lkty mnynm  
(8A) whw\(^2\)-yrd lqr\(^2\)ty hyrdn  
(8B) wšb lʾlw byhwk lʾmr  
(8C) ṣm-ʾmytk bhrb  

De Hoop  
(8A) whnh ʿmk\(_{[17]}\) šm\(_{[17]}\)y bn-gr\(_{[7]}\) [21?]  
(8B) bn-hymnyn\(_{[9]}\) mbhrym [3]\(^9\)  
(8C) whw\(^3\) qllny qllh nmršt [5]  
(8A) bywm lkty mnynm [2]  
(8B) whw\(^3\)-yrd lqr\(^2\)ty hyrdn [5]  
(8B) wšb lʾlw byhwk lʾmr [5]  
(8C) ṣm-ʾmytk bhrb [1]  
(9A) wʾth lʾtnqhw  
(9B) ky ṣyš hkm ʾth [2]  
(9A) ky ṣyš hkm ʾth  
(9B) wʾdšʾ tʾṣr tʾšh-lw  
(9B) whrwdt ṣʾybtw bdm ṣʾwl  
(10A) ṣm ʾbtyw [2]  
(10B) ṣw QB r ʾyr dwd  

In our delimitation the final strophe contains both direct oration and narrated material, which is not unusual in narrative poetry.\(^10\) The same combination of narration and direct speech in one strophe can be found at the beginning of the pericope. Division into two strophes A.i.1 and A.ii.1 (vv. 1 and 2) is by no means necessary. The marker of separation downwards (ʾlʾmr) used by Koopmans (p. 437) is at least arbitrary, because he could just as well have used it as a marker of separation upwards.\(^11\) In the case of a strophe of one verse-line, as assumed by Koopmans, this justifica-