Critique of Mark Vedder's "Ivan Panin's Numerics in Scripture"
By Wayne ODonnell, February 27, 2024

The first example Mark gives of Panin's method is on page 27 about Genesis 1:1. For the sake of time and simplicity, I'll focus on only the first three patterns out of twenty-five that Panin found in that verse - 1) the number of words, 2) the number of letters, and 3) the place value of the letters. Panin (ingenuously) called the patterns he found, "features." I'll stick to the normal English usage of "patterns."

Abbreviations and Explanations:
DOM=Direct Object Marker.
Feature=Any pattern you find, like Feature 1 is the first pattern you find, etc.
Obj=Object, like a Direct or Indirect Object in a sentence.
PV=Place Value, calculated by adding the numeric value of the position of each letter in the alphabet, like using a child's Dick Tracey decoder where A=1, B=2, etc.
**=Failed searches for patterns purposely ommitted by Panin.

Panin's Pattern 1. The first verse has 7 words.
Panin's Pattern 2. The first verse has 28 (4*7) letters.
Objection #1. Why did Panin mention the number of words and letters in verse 1, but not its PV? Because it comes to 298, which isn't equally divisible by 7.

Gen. 1:1	הָאָרֶץ	וְאֵת	הַשָּׁמַיִם	אֵת	אֱלֹהִים	בָּרָא	בְּרֵאשִׁית	Total
Translation	the earth	and (DOM)	the heavens	(DOM)	God	created	In beginning	
Words	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	7
Letters	4	3	5	2	5	3	6	28
**PV	18+20+1+5=44	22+1+6=29	13+10+13+21+5=62	22+1=23	13+10+5+12+1=41	1+20+2=23	22+10+21+1+20+2=76	298

Panin's Pattern (no number): The subject and predicate have 14 (2*7) letters.
Panin's Pattern 3: The subject and predicate have a PV of 140 (20*7).

Subject & Predicate					אֱלֹהִים	בָּרָא	בְּרֵאשִׁית	Total
Translation					God	created	In beginning	
**Words					3	2	1	3
Letters					5	3	6	14
PV					13+10+5+12+1=41	1+20+2=23	22+10+21+1+20+2=76	140

Panin's Pattern 4: The objects have 14 (2*7) letters.
Objection #2. Why did Panin mention the PV of the subject and predicate but not the PV of the objects? Because the PV of the objects come to 158, which isn't equally divisible by 7.

Objects	הָאָרֶץ	וְאֵת	הַשָּׁמַיִם	אֵת				Total
Translation	the earth	and (DOM)	the heavens	(DOM)				
**Words	4	3	2	1				4
Letters	4	3	5	2				14
**PV	18+20+1+5=44	22+1+6=29	13+10+13+21+5=62	22+1=23				158

Panin's Pattern 5: The two objects both have 7 letters.
Objection #3. Why did Panin mention the number of letters in object 1, but not its PV? Because it comes to 85, which isn't divisible by 7.

Object 1			הַשָּׁמַיִם	אֵת				Total
Translation			the heavens	(DOM)				
**Words			2	1				2
Letters			5	2				14
**PV			13+10+13+21+5=62	22+1=23				85

Panin's Pattern 5: The two objects both have 7 letters.
Objection #3. Why did Panin mention the number of letters in object 2, but not its PV? Because it comes to 73, which isn't divisible by 7.

Object 2	הָאָרֶץ	וְאֵת						Total
Translation	the earth	and (DOM)						
**Words	2	1						2
Letters	4	3						14
**PV	18+20+1+5=44	22+1+6=29						73

In other words, you can prove anything if you try enough patterns, and only report the ones that are succesful matches.

Objection #4. Maybe a better division of words in Genesis 1:1 might be the following, in which case there aren't 7 words, but 11 (of course 11 is also significant in scripture, but so is 1, 2, 3, 4, etc., etc.)

11	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
earth	the	(direct object marker)	and	heavens	the	(direct object marker)	God	created	beginning	In
אָרֶץ	הָ	אֵת	וְ	שָּׁמַיִם	הַ	אֵת	אֱלֹהִים	בָּרָא	רֵאשִׁית	בְּ

Objection #5. The next verse, Genesis 1:2, has 14 (2*7) words, but 52 letters, which isn't divisible by 7. Does that mean Genesis 1:2 isn't inspired? (I didn't calculate the PV.)

Objection #6. And the following verse, Genesis 1:3, has 6 words and 23 letters. Does that mean Genesis 1:3 isn't inspired? (I didn't calculate the PV.)

Panin would say, well, a different number pattern applies to Genesis 1:2 and 1:3 because there's a different MEANING to those verses, and the patterns we find match the meanings. For example, the 52 letters of verse 2 could be looked at as a multiple of 4 and 13. Four relating to earthly things and 13 being something bad, since "And the earth was formless and void." We can make up anything here, and noone can say if we're right or wrong. We are only limited by our imagination and cleverness. So the meaning could be anything. But something that can mean anything means nothing.

It's just like those who spiritualize the scriptures. Per my book on "Ezekiel's Temple" in Ezekiel 40-48, Vernan McGee said he thought the 3 six-cubit little rooms on each side of the six temple gates represented the individual mansions Jesus is preparing us in heaven, but he also liked another interpreter's idea they might represent the individual churches on earth. I suggest you may as well interpret the three sixes, 666, on each side to be the antichrist, and the Milennial temple as a trap, but that actually the cubits represent - cubits. Leave any out and the physical building we will see in the Milennial Kingdom would have a hole in it.

According to the entry in Wikipedia on Panin, “Panin’s claim that the statistical anomalies are proof of divine inspiration has been dismissed by skeptics, who attribute the phenomenon to random chance, and have produced examples of similar patterns occurring in non-Bliblcal texts.” Per Wikipedia ...

> **Miracles in Edgar Allan Poe.** The following example is an expansion of one first presented on USENET by Charles Culver of Computers for Christ. For this example, we will use numerical values for English letters assigned using the same pattern as used for Arabic, Greek and Hebrew [note: this refers to a different pattern from “Place Value”].
>
> A=1 B=2 C=3 D=4 E=5 F=6 G=7 H=8 I=9
> J=10 K=20 L=30 M=40 N=50 O=60 P=70 Q=80 R=90
> S=100 T=200 U=300 V=400 W=500 X=600 Y=700 Z=800
>
> We will analyze the famous first line of Poe’s classic poem “The Raven”: “Once upon a midnight dreary, while I pondered, weak and weary.”
>
> There are 7x7 letters.
> The first and last words sum to 202x7, of which the first letters contribute 80x7.
> The consonants in words starting with a consonant sum to 537x7.
> The consonants in words ending with a consonant sum to 485x7, of which 192x7 comes from the odd length words and 293x7 from the even length words.
> The consonants in words 2,4,6,8,10 sum to 177x7.
> There are 7 words ending with consonants. [My underlining.]
> There are 3x7 consonants in words of even length.
>
> Considering words 1,3,5,7,9,11:
> There are 3x7 letters.
> The even (2,4,6..) letters in each word total 138x7.
> The last letters of each word total 205x7.
> The first and last letters of each word total 51x7x7.
> Considering the verb "pondered":
> The first letter has value 10x7.
> The vowels have total value 10x7.
>
> In his original article, Charles wrote: “There are a number of other objections to Panin's methodology as well, which time does not permit me to go into.” It appears that Charles is just as good at writing numerical text as Poe was.
>
> The sentence has 3x7 words and a total value of 143x7x7.
> The first word has value 44x7.
> Words ending in vowels have value 230x7.
> Words ending in consonants have value 708x7. [My underlining.]
> The three pronouns total 40x7.
> The words which start with a vowel and end with a consonant total 3x7x7x7.
> Considering just words 2,4,6,8,...,20:
> There are 6x7 letters.
> The 3x7 letters in odd position in the sentence total 53x7x7.
> The 3x7 letters in odd position in a word total 54x7x7.
> The first letters total 163x7.
> The consonants total 408x7.

Notice the patterns I underlined above about “the words ending in consonants.” Culver’s mentioned that 7 words ended in consonants in the Poe sentence, but he didn’t mention the number of words ending in consonants in the Culver sentence, because it’s 11. And he mentioned that in Culver’s sentence the words ending in consonants have a value of 708x7, but he didn’t mention the value of the words that end in consonants in Poe’s sentence, presumably because their value isn’t divisible by 7.

Lesson: If you look at enough potential patterns, you can always find many, and not report on the ones that didn’t work out.

Panin mostly looked for patterns of multiples of seven. In any random text, you would expect to find at least one in seven searches to yield a pattern of seven. And patterns based on smaller numbers would yield even more patterns. For example, every other search for a pattern should yield a pattern based on two.

In Genesis 1:1, Panin persisted until he found twenty-five patterns, some pretty far-fetched. He undoubtedly accomplished this by looking for many, many more patterns and only reporting the ones that worked. On average, he would only have had to look for 175 patterns to find 25 7-matching ones in any random text. Panin felt that if he found ten patterns in any part of the text, the chances of that being by chance were infinitesimally small, but since he checked so many patterns, he could always find at least ten.

In that sense, the chances of a car with my exact license plate number to be sitting in my driveway at this particular moment are also infinitesimally small, as is every other event in the world, but since it happens to be so, if I make what is already there what I’m looking for, I always find it. Panin certainly tested a lot of patterns. He reportedly had over 40,000 pages of notes. (What a waste of one’s life.)

Panin said he found better results with the modernist versions of the Bible, preferring Wescott and Hort’s versions. Reportedly, he chose from their alternate readings based on which ones gave the best patterns he was looking for. To him, this may have ‘proved’ which alternate reading was genuine, but statistically he ‘tuned’ his data to match his tests - i.e., chose the text that best fits the pattern and then said the pattern proves the miraculous origin of the text. Panin even created his own version of the Greek New Testament to find patterns in, not even limiting himself objectively to Wescott and Hort’s text. Via circular reasoning, he thus created the patterns he then found in the text. He also (sometimes or always, I didn’t research) used Greek roots instead of the actual word in the text.

And Panin’s conclusion is dead wrong about the modernist Wescott and Hort version, which is always parroted to be based on “the oldest and best manuscripts.” This issue isn’t a matter for opinion, but fact. The Bible says, “His truth endures to all generations,” in Psalm 100. The Sinaiticus and Vaticanus were not found and available for use until after 1850 (and they were found in compromising situations, like with the unbelieving Roman Catholic organization who refused access, and in a trash can with pages being used for fire starter). Does that mean for 2000 years no generation had access to a copy of the inspired New Testament? It’s not enough for God to miraculously inspire his word. If he doesn’t also preserve it and make it available, it's of no value. The Byzantine text family comprises more than 90% of all manuscripts, and it’s always been available - thus it’s called the “Received Text.”

If you want to find where God preserved the Hebrew Old Testament text, you go to the Jewish rabbis who preserved the text in their own language, not to the Roman Catholic organization in Rome or to Alexandria in Africa. And if you want to find where God preserved the Greek New Testament text, you go to the Greeks who preserved the text in their own language in Greece and Constantinople. Their lectionaries included the whole New Testament and were always freely available. And the manuscripts their lectionaries were based on were also available.

It's undeniably impossible that the Wescott and Hort text matches the original manuscript, because not a single manuscript matches their text. That’s because their text is ‘eclectic.’ It’s artificially built by taking words and snippets from

many different manuscripts. If you want something with a good probability of being the actual text of the original New Testament, look into the reasons Wilbur Pickering believes Family 35 is the actual NT text.

This whole issue is the same as with the "Bible Codes," which you can look up on Wikipedia, which says, "The statistical likelihood of the Bible code arising by chance has been thoroughly researched, and it is now widely considered to be statistically insignificant, as similar phenomena can be observed in any sufficiently lengthy text." The Bible Codes uses the Equidistant Letter Sequence method of looking for patterns. In the test case mentioned on Wikipedia, famous Rabbi names, birth dates, and death dates were 'found' in the Bible.

Also from Wikipedia's entry on Panin:

> In 1923, R. McCormack published The Heptadic Structure of Scripture (Marshall Brothers), which also showed a great many features of the number 7 in the first two chapters of Matthew. Here are just a few of McCormack's features: The first chapter has 7x62 words and 7x7x44 letters, and the second has 7x64 words and 7x7x47 letters. The total number of words is 7x7x18 and the total number of letters is 7x7x7x13. Of this the verbs give 7x19 words and 7x144 letters, the proper nouns 7x23 words and 7x144 letters, the common nouns 7x18 words and 7x144 letters, the pronouns 7x8 words and 7x36 letters, and the adverbs 7x4 words and 7x16 letters. ... The proper names make 7x7x2 words and 7x7x12 letters. And so on, for many pages. What's the catch? ... Their two mathematically proven texts are different! ... Each of the two authors gave multiple features of 7 that do not exist in the text used by the other. In order to produce these patterns, they modified the text using the many variant readings that appear in old manuscripts. In addition to this deliberate cooking of the data, they presented some of the vast number of features of 7 that appear in any text by pure chance. The only logical conclusion we can draw from this sorry episode is that neither author achieved anything beyond self-delusion.

That is, both versions of the text were 'proven' to be miraculously inspired. This brings up another issue. To even give the slightest weight to numerology in trying to determine the true text proportionally diverts one from the valid ways to determine the inspired text. It's like when the Bible says honor your parents and care for them when you're old, and provide for your wife and children, and then you give any weight to having just met a waitress named Cheyanne when you're trying to decide whether to move to a financially risky job in Cheyanne far from your relatives. See my book on "Paul's Decision Making in Acts" for the biblical way of knowing God's will.

When Jesus performed miracles, no one could deny they had seen an authentic miracle. Even his unbelieving enemies could say at best, "He's doing his miracles by the power of Satan (Beelzebub)." But when Charismatics do 'miracles' today, even many Christians can say it wasn't an authentic miracle. Likewise, Panin fails to convince both Christians and non-Christians, mathematicians and non-mathematicians, not because they are morally resistant to 'truth,' but because, as illustrated above, Panin's methods fail to prove anything.

In my book, "A Brief History of the Charismatic Movement," I cite an experiment that trained college students in a few hours to 'speak in tongues' (not foreign languages, but babble) so that Charismatics weren't able to discern any difference between the trained college students and Charismatic tongues-speakers. But anything that can be taught in a few hours isn't a miracle. Charismatic babbling doesn't convince either the church or the world that it's a miracle, and neither does Panin's results that can be replicated in any literature.

Numerology during this church age, like Charismaticism, is another form of sensationalism for those seeking excitement instead of the 'boring' plain meaning of scripture that "is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished to all good works."

This critique has only scratched the surface. A quick Google search will find the work of many others who have put far more time than I have examining Panin's theories.