1. The Song at the Reed Sea in Exodus 15 — Logotechnical Analysis

Guidelines

- Please read the General Introduction and the Introduction to the Embedded Poetry.
- For common features found in the numerical analysis charts, see the Key to the charts.

Exodus 15:1b-18 in its Literary Context

The Song at the Reed Sea is the first of the ten embedded hymns outside the Book of Psalms. Like its counterpart at the end of the Torah, the Song of Moses in Deuteronomy 32, with which it shares several significant features, it was composed along with its surrounding framework. The poem was not simply inserted as an inset hymn into the existing account of the Reed Sea event, but was woven from the same fabric as the material surrounding it. There is a logical flow of thought from the concluding verse of the Reed Sea story in 14:31 through 15:21. Being in awe of YHWH’s saving act, the Israelites put their faith in him and in Moses (14:31) and with a Song of Praise they demonstrate their faith and celebrate YHWH’s triumph and his incomparability (15:1-18).

In the Epilogue to the Song (v. 19), the author recapitulates the Reed Sea event, significantly in exactly the same way as Deut. 32:44 recapitulates the recital of the Song of Moses. The parashah petuchah (P) after v. 19 in MT is an indication that the Epilogue strictly belongs to the Song, with which it constitutes a numerical unit of 187 (11 x 17) words. The narrative that follows, vs. 20-26, is also closely connected to the Song. It divides into two sections which are both modelled on the Song: the 26-word Miriam episode, vs. 20-21, and the 52-word Marah episode, vs. 22-26.

The striking similarity between the numerical structure of the Song and the narrative in 20-26 unequivocally attests to the compositional unity of vs. 1-26:

- vs. 1b-3 in the Song, and vs. 20-21 in the narrative have 26 words;
- vs. 4-7 and 8-10 in the Song, and vs. 22-23 in the narrative have 32 words;
- vs. 14-18 in the Song, and vs. 24-26 in the narrative have 52 (2 x 26) words.

Note also that the latter passage, vs. 24-26, is precisely divided into 26 words in the narrative and 26 in YHWH’s speech!

In terms of numerical composition, it is important to note that the statement about Israel’s faith in YHWH and in Moses in 14:31 – the motive for singing the Song - is composed of 17 words, giving 204 (12 x 17) words for 14:31 – 15:19 (187 + 17). The 204 words are the product of the number 12, symbolically representing the 12 sons of Jacob, and the divine name number 17, symbolically representing YHWH. This supposition is buttressed by the fact that the 12 springs and 70 palm trees mentioned in 15:27 symbolically signify, in my view, the 12 sons of Jacob and his 70 descendants - compare Exod.1:1-5.

But there is more: the word מים, ‘water’, occurs 7 times in the entire text, with 4 instances in vs. 22-26. Being the dominant theme in the account of the continuation of the journey of the Israelites through the desert, the key-word ‘water’ connects vs. 20-26 to the Song. This also holds true of the 10 occurrences of the key-word ים, ‘sea’, and the 17 occurrences of the divine name in vs. 1-26.
Special Features of the Song at the Reed Sea

- I regard vs. 1b-18 as the poem proper. It is concluded by a Coda (v. 18, suddenly phrased in the 3rd person after the 2nd person passage in vs. 6-17). The poem is followed by a semi-poetic Epilogue (v. 19) which is closely linked to the Song by the significant number of words in vs. 1b-19, 187 (11 x 17).

- As the first embedded hymn in the Torah, the Song at the Reed Sea is a high grade numerical composition. As such, it sets the fashion for its counterpart at the end of the Torah, the Song of Moses in Deuteronomy 32. Like the Song of Moses, its strophic structure is clearly determined by the divine name numbers 17 and 26, and by the kabod number 32, the decimal value of kəwd, ‘glory’ (20 + 2 + 6 + 4 = 32), as shown in the chart. These numbers are woven into the fabric of the text in various ways, most significantly by way of concatenation in vs. 1-13. Moreover, they determine the strophic structure to a great extent.

- Apart from its impressive numerical features, the most defining characteristic of the Song is its unique, markedly regular rhetorical structure. It has exactly 39 verselines which are deliberately divided into 26 in vs. 1b-13 (Cantos I-III) and 13 in vs. 14-18 (Canto IV), in order to constitute the YHWH-’èchad formula: 39 = 26 + 13, which clearly alludes to YHWH’s uniqueness so forcefully expressed in the meaningful centre of the Song (v. 11). 39 happens to represent the numerical value of the name Moses! See Observation 3.

The 39 verselines are consistently made up of strikingly terse bicola, giving 78 (3 x 26) cola in total, divided into 52 (2 x 26) in vs. 1b-13 and 26 in vs. 14-18.

The key to the understanding of the rhetorical structure is to be found in the three staircase parallelisms which appear at strategic points in the text: in v. 6, v. 11, and v. 16e-h (Perles, Cross & Freedman, Muilenburg, Howell, Fokkelman and others – see the Select Bibliography at the end of the file):

- **v. 6** Your right hand YHWH, majestic in power! Your right hand YHWH, shattered the enemy!
- **v. 11** Who is like you among the gods, YHWH? Who is like you majestic in holiness?
- **v. 16e-h** Till they pass by: your people, YHWH! Till they pass by: the people you have produced!

This exceptionally terse staccato style (2+2 + 2+2; 2+2 + 2+2 + 2+2; 2+2 + 2+3, which can vary in terseness, e.g. in v. 2 (3+3 + 3+3) and v. 3 (3+2), has great power of expression. This also holds true for the unique phenomenon of the 1-word cola in v. 8d and 14b. The significantly longer second strophe in v. 5, which has 4 words, obviously functions to mark the end of Canto I and to focus special attention on the two extra words: יִהְיֶהָה, ‘like a stone’. This phrase recurs in v. 16 as one word: כִּפַּר, ‘as a stone’. Compare כָּפַר, ‘as lead’, in v. 10c at the end of Canto II.

For an overview of the compositional structure of the Song, see Observation 2.
**Strophic structure - Canto/Stanza:** || **Canticle/Section boundary:** | **Staircase:**

- Labuschagne: The canto structure of the Song is based on content and the direction of address, while the strophic structure is primarily based on numerical grounds: vs. 1b-3, 4-5 || 6-7, 8-10 || 11, 12-13 || 14-15 || 16a-d || 16e-h || 17-18 (4 cantos, with 9 strophes - v. 11 being the central strophe – and 39 verselines with **78** (3 x **26**) cola – compare Fokkelman). In terms of content and verselines, I find a strong caesura - || - between vs. 1b-13 and 14-18 - See Observation 2.

- Pieter van der Lught (private communication, 2014): 1-2, 3-5 || 6-8, 9-10 || 11-13, 14-16ab || 16cd-18 (4 cantos, 21 verselines, 44 cola, taking vs. 8 and 15 as tricola).

- Duane Christensen (BIBAL.net, 2006) takes v. 19 as part of the poetic body of the poem, which he arranges in a nested menorah pattern: 1, 2-3, 4-5, 6-7, 8, 9, 10, 11-12a, 12b-13, 14-15, 16, 17-18, 19 (13 strophes), with v. 10 at the centre.

- Jan P. Fokkelman (Major Poems of the Hebrew Bible, Volume I: Ex. 15, Deut 32, and Job 3, Assen, 1998, pp. 24-53) follows Perles, Cross & Freedman, and Muilenburg in broad outline: 1, 2-3, 4-5 || 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11 || 12-13, 14, 15a-d, 15e-16d || 16e-h || 17, 18 (4 stanzas with 16 strophes, **39** verselines and **78** cola).

- R.D. Patterson (“The Song of Redemption”, WTJ 57 (1995), 453-461): 1b-2 || 3-5, **6** || 7, 8-10, **11** || 12-16a, **16b** || 17-18.

- Maribeth Howell (“Exodus 15,1b-18: A poetical Analysis”, ETL 65 (1989), 5-42): 1b, 2-3, 4-5, 6-7, 8-10, 11-12 || 13, 14-16, 17, 18. She finds 2 stanzas with 10 strophes, taking vs. 13 as a separate strophe and vs. 14-16 as one strophe. Though she uses the term bicolon (finding 72 cola), she does not explicitly refer to (verse)line, of which there are 36 in her colometric division, taking vs. 8c-f, 14a-d, and 16e-h as bicolon: 8c-d, 14a-b, and 16c-d.

- C. Houtman (Exodus, 1989): 1, 2-3, 4-5, 6-7, 8-10, 11, 12-17, 18 (6 strophes, regarding v. 1b as setting the stage, and v. 18 as a coda).


- James Muilenburg ("A Liturgy on the Triumphs of Yahweh", in: Studia Semitica et Biblica Th. C. Vriezen dedicata (1966), pp. 233-251): 1b || 2-3, 4-5, **6** || 7-8, 9-10 || 11 || 12-14, 15-16b, **16cd** || 17 || 18 (3 divisions concluded by hymnic responses).

- John D. Watts (Vetus Testamentum 7, 1957): 1b-3, 4-5 || 6-7, 8-10, 11-12 || 13 + 14a + 15a + 15b + 16bc || 17a + 15c + 16a + 14b + 17b + 17c (2 parts with two strophes each: 1b-12, in a strict sense the Song at the Sea, and 13-17 (reconstructed), the effect of Israel’s deliverance upon its later history).

- Marc Rozelaar (Vetus Testamentum 2, 1952): 1b, 2-5, 6-10, 11-13, 14-17, 18 (4 strophes, with 1b as a prologue and 18 as an epilogue).

- F.M.Th. de Liagre Böhl (Tekst en Uitleg, 1928) regards v. 19 as part of the poetic body of the poem in its present form: 1b-2, 3-5, 6-7, 8-9 || 10-11, 12-14, 15-16b, 16c-18 (2 sections with originally 8 strophes (4 + 4), to which v. 19 was later added to form the 9th strophe: v. 18-19).

- F. Perles ("Zur althebräischen Strophik", WZKM 10 (1896), 103-114. He deserves the credit for being, as far as I know, the first to identify the structuring function of the three
Logotechnical analysis

- Columns a and b show the number of words before and after the atnach.
- Column c: the poem (2nd and 3rd person); d: words in the narrative framework.
- The numbers to the right of the Hebrew text relate to the 39 verselines.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total</th>
<th>a</th>
<th>b</th>
<th>c/c</th>
<th>d</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1a Narrative</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Framework</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1b The word 'sea', occurs 10 times</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>in vs. 1-26</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hymnic Introitus, v. 1b</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strophe 1 Total, v. 1b-3</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strophe 2 Total, v. 4-5</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canto I Total, v. 1b-5</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strophe 3 Total, v. 6-7</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total, v. 4-7</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total, v. 1b-7</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 The word 'water', occurs 7 times</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>in vs. 1-26</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strophe 4 Total, v. 8-10</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canto II Total, v. 6-10</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

© 2014 Casper Labuschagne  1.exod15— rev. 10/13/14 3:44 PM
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>12 = 8 + 4</td>
<td>12 + 0</td>
<td>12 = 8 + 4</td>
<td>12 = 8 + 4</td>
<td>12 = 8 + 4</td>
<td>12 = 8 + 4</td>
<td>12 = 8 + 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>22</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>44 = 26 + 18</td>
<td>44 + 0</td>
<td>44 = 26 + 18</td>
<td>44 = 26 + 18</td>
<td>44 = 26 + 18</td>
<td>44 = 26 + 18</td>
<td>44 = 26 + 18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>23</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>60 = 34 + 26</td>
<td>60 + 0</td>
<td>60 = 34 + 26</td>
<td>60 = 34 + 26</td>
<td>60 = 34 + 26</td>
<td>60 = 34 + 26</td>
<td>60 = 34 + 26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>14 = 9 + 5</td>
<td>14 + 0</td>
<td>14 = 9 + 5</td>
<td>14 = 9 + 5</td>
<td>14 = 9 + 5</td>
<td>14 = 9 + 5</td>
<td>14 = 9 + 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>26 + 0</td>
<td>26 = 17 + 9</td>
<td>26 = 17 + 9</td>
<td>26 = 17 + 9</td>
<td>26 = 17 + 9</td>
<td>26 = 17 + 9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>19 = 11 + 8</td>
<td>19 + 0</td>
<td>19 = 11 + 8</td>
<td>19 = 11 + 8</td>
<td>19 = 11 + 8</td>
<td>19 = 11 + 8</td>
<td>19 = 11 + 8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>17 = 8 + 9</td>
<td>17 + 0</td>
<td>17 = 8 + 9</td>
<td>17 = 8 + 9</td>
<td>17 = 8 + 9</td>
<td>17 = 8 + 9</td>
<td>17 = 8 + 9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16a-d</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>36 = 20 + 13</td>
<td>36 + 0</td>
<td>36 = 20 + 13</td>
<td>36 = 20 + 13</td>
<td>36 = 20 + 13</td>
<td>36 = 20 + 13</td>
<td>36 = 20 + 13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16e-h</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>37 + 0</td>
<td>37 = 21 + 16</td>
<td>37 = 21 + 16</td>
<td>37 = 21 + 16</td>
<td>37 = 21 + 16</td>
<td>37 = 21 + 16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>34</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>38 + 0</td>
<td>38 = 25 + 13</td>
<td>38 = 25 + 13</td>
<td>38 = 25 + 13</td>
<td>38 = 25 + 13</td>
<td>38 = 25 + 13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Total, v. 16</td>
<td>16 = 12 + 4</td>
<td>16 + 0</td>
<td>16 = 12 + 4</td>
<td>16 = 12 + 4</td>
<td>16 = 12 + 4</td>
<td>16 = 12 + 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total, v. 14-18</td>
<td>52 = 31 + 21 = 52 + 0</td>
<td>126 = 78 + 48 = 126 + 0</td>
<td>126 = 78 + 48 = 126 + 0</td>
<td>126 = 78 + 48 = 126 + 0</td>
<td>126 = 78 + 48 = 126 + 0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total, v. 18-19</td>
<td>23 = 17 + 6 = 23 + 0</td>
<td>187 = 103 + 84 = 187 + 0</td>
<td>187 = 103 + 84 = 187 + 0</td>
<td>187 = 103 + 84 = 187 + 0</td>
<td>187 = 103 + 84 = 187 + 0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total, v. 1b-19</td>
<td>198 = 114 + 84 = 187 + 11</td>
<td>187 = 103 + 84 = 187 + 0</td>
<td>187 = 103 + 84 = 187 + 0</td>
<td>187 = 103 + 84 = 187 + 0</td>
<td>187 = 103 + 84 = 187 + 0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>11 + 0</td>
<td>11 = 7 + 4</td>
<td>11 = 7 + 4</td>
<td>11 = 7 + 4</td>
<td>11 = 7 + 4</td>
<td>11 = 7 + 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coda</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total, v. 1a-19</td>
<td>198 = 114 + 84 = 187 + 11</td>
<td>187 = 103 + 84 = 187 + 0</td>
<td>187 = 103 + 84 = 187 + 0</td>
<td>187 = 103 + 84 = 187 + 0</td>
<td>187 = 103 + 84 = 187 + 0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

© 2014 Casper Labuschagne  1.exod15— rev. 10/13/14 3:44 PM
### At Marah YHWH put the people of Israel to the test

Column c: words in the divine speech; d: words in the narrative framework

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>a</th>
<th>b</th>
<th>c</th>
<th>d</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25a</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25b</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Divine speech addressed to Israel

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>a</th>
<th>b</th>
<th>c</th>
<th>d</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31</td>
<td>129</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>84</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32</td>
<td>308</td>
<td>178</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>213</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Grand Total,** v. 1a-26

© 2014 Casper Labuschagne  1.exod15— rev. 10/13/14 3:44 PM

Page 6
The divine name occurs 17 times in the Song, the Epilogue and the narrative (vs. 20-26). It shares this feature with the Song of Moses and its Framework. See Observation 4 below.

Observations

1. The Meaningful centre of the Song

In terms of the 168 words of the Song, the middle words are to be found in v. 10ab (168 = 82 + 4 + 82):

\[
\text{You blew with your blast: the sea covered them}
\]

In themselves, these words are meaningful, since they describe the practical side of YHWH's saving act. For the gist of the poem, representing its quintessential idea, we have to look for another deliberately designed meaningful centre. This is to be found on the level of the strophic structure: the middle Strophe 5, v. 11 (9 = 4 + 1 + 4):

\[
\text{Who is like you among the gods, YHWH?}
\text{Who is like you majestic in holiness?}
\text{Awesome in radiance working wonders!}
\]

The meaningful centre, Strophe 5, v. 11, stands out for several reasons.

First, it contains the pivotal instance of the three conspicuous staircase parallelisms (vs. 6, 11, and 16e-h) – in box in the chart. Its striking form makes it noticeable as being of crucial importance.

The first staircase parallelism, v. 6, stands at the beginning of Canto II dealing with YHWH's powerful deed, shattering the enemy.

The staircase parallelism in v. 11 stands at the beginning of Canto III dealing with the meaning of YHWH's triumphant manifestation, the salvation of his people and leading them to his holy dwelling-place.

The third one, v. 16e-h, is positioned in a 17-word strophe (v. 16) which stands at the beginning of Canticle IV.2 dealing with the fulfilling of YHWH's intention to plant them in his dwelling-place.


Second, v. 11 contains the only rhetorical question in the poem, the strongest possible mode of expression. In comparison with an ordinary statement, the rhetorical question, which implicitly elicits a response from the hearer, is far superior when it comes to power of expression.

Rhetorical questions are frequently used in the Old Testament to express the absolute power, uniqueness, singularity and incomparability of a person, especially of YHWH. The rhetorical question is one of the most forceful and effectual ways employed in speech for driving home some idea or conviction. Because of its impressive and persuasive effect, the hearer is not merely listener: he is forced to frame the expected answer in his mind, and by doing so, he actually becomes a co-expressor of the speaker’s conviction. See my dissertation The Incomparability of Yahweh in the Old Testament, E.J. Brill: Leiden, 1966, p. 23.

Third, in the Masoretic tradition the word יִלְגָּד, ‘like you’, is written in an unusual way: the word is normally written יִלְגָד. The present form may have been intended as a graphic indication that v. 11 is of special importance.

As I have argued in my dissertation - dealing with the idea of YHWH’s incomparability within the framework of corresponding expressions used in the daily speech of
Biblical times, and against the background of similar utterances in the religious languages of Mesopotamia, Egypt and Ugarit – the characteristics of YHWH associated with the idea that he is incomparable were considered his defining qualities that distinguish him from all other gods.

The first and foremost among these qualities are YHWH’s saving acts in Israel’s history as the redeeming God, the God of justice who frees the enslaved and helps the weak and the suppressed. In short, his peerlessness emerged through the events of the Exodus. This idea permeates the texts relating to YHWH’s incomparability and reverberates particularly in the hymns praising him for this.

The relevant texts: Ex. 8:6 (10); Ex. 9:14; Deut. 15:11; Deut. 3:24; Deut. 4:7; Deut. 4:32-35; The Song of Moses, Deut. 32:39; The Blessing of Moses, Deut. 33:26-29; the Song of Hannah, 1 Sam. 2:2; the Prayer of David, 2 Sam. 7:22; the Song of David, 2 Sam. 22:32 (cf. Ps. 18:32); the Prayer of Solomon, 1 Ki. 8:23.

In the Book of Psalms: Ps. 35:9-10; Ps. 40:6; Ps. 71:14-19; Ps. 77:12-16; Ps. 86:8-10; Ps. 89:6-15; Ps. 113:5-7-9.

And elsewhere: 2 Chron. 14:10; 2 Chron. 20:6; Isa. 40:18.25-26; Isa. 44:6-8; Isa. 46:5-13; Mi. 7:18.

2. Overview of the compositional structure

In terms of content, the Song divides into two main parts:
- vs. 1b-13, dealing with the Exodus event
- vs. 14-18, the reaction of the nations and the fulfilling of YHWH’s intention

The bipartite structure is underscored by the division of the 39 verselines into precisely 26 in vs. 1b-13, and 13 in vs. 14-18, which reflects the YHWH-echad formula: 39 = 26 + 13. This numerical device buttresses the crucial idea of YHWH’s uniqueness which is eloquently expressed in the meaningful centre in v. 11.

The compositional structure can be outlined as follows:

- **Canto I**, vs. 1b-5
  - 3 verselines
  - 42 words
  - Strophe 1, vs. 1b-3: 5 verselines, 26 words
  - Strophe 2, vs. 4-5: 3 verselines, 16 words

- **Canto II**, vs. 6-10
  - 12 verselines
  - 48 words
  - Strophe 3, vs. 6-7: 4 verselines, 16 words
  - Strophe 4, vs. 8-10: 8 verselines, 32 words

- **Canto III**, vs. 11-13
  - 5 verselines
  - 26 words
  - Strophe 5, v. 11: 3 verselines, 12 words
  - Strophe 6, vs. 12-13: 3 verselines, 14 words

- **Canto IV**, vs. 14-18
  - 13 verselines
  - 52 (2x26) words
  - Strophe 7, vs. 14-15: 5 verselines, 19 words
  - Strophe 8, 16a-d: 4 verselines, 17 words
  - Strophe 9, vs. 17-18: 4 verselines, 16 words

3. Significant numerical features of the Song and its Framework

- There are 308 words in the Song and its Framework: 44 x 7 = 28 x 11.
- Compare the 462 words in the Song of Moses: 66 x 7 = 42 x 11.
- The Song and its Framework are divided into 26 Masoretic verses.
- There are 17 occurrences of the divine name in the Song and its Framework.
- The number 39 (verselines) also represents the numerical value of the name mšh ‘Moses’, the reverse of hšm, ‘the Name’ (revealed to Moses in Exodus 3!): the positional value of h (5) + š (21) + m (13) = 39.
- The Song is made up of 78 (3 x 26) cola.
- Including the Recapitulation (v. 19), we find 187 (11 x 17) words.
- The Song has 168 (24x7) words; including the 2-word introductory formula: 170.
- The statement about Israel's faith in YHWH (14:31) is composed of 17 words.
- vs. 2-3 17 words in total
- vs. 1b-3, Strophe 1 26 words, with 17 after atnach
- vs. 1b-5, Canto I 26 words after atnach
- vs. 4-7, Strophes 2-3 32 words, with 17 after atnach
- vs. 1b-7 58 words, with 34 (2 x 17) after atnach (concatenation!)
- the 26 words in Strophe 1 and the 32 in Strophes 2-3 constitute the well-known kebod-YHWH formula: 58 = 32 + 26
- vs. 8-10, Strophe 4 32 words in total
- vs. 8-11, Strophes 4-5 26 words before atnach
- vs. 6-11, Strophes 3-5 60 words, with 34 (2 x 17) before, and 26 after atnach
- vs. 6-10, Canto II 26 words before atnach
- vs. 11-13, Canto III 26 words, with 17 before atnach
- vs. 8-13 58 words, once again 58 = 32 + 26 (kebod-YHWH)
- vs. 16, Strophe 8 17 words in total
- vs. 14-18, Canto IV 52 (2 x 26) words in total
- vs. 6-18 78 (3 x 26) words before atnach
- vs. 1b-18, the Song 78 (3 x 26) words after atnach
- vs. 18-19 17 words before atnach
- vs. 20-21a 17 words in the introduction to Miriam's Refrain
- vs. 20-21 26 words dealing with Miriam's Refrain
- vs. 25a-26 26 words before atnach
- vs. 25b-26 34 (2 x 17) words about YHWH putting Israel to the test
- vs. 26 26 words in YHWH's speech
- vs. 24-26 52 (2 x 26) words, with 26 in the narrative (Column d)
- vs. 19-26 52 (2 x 26) words after atnach
- vs. 1a-26 130 (5 x 26) words after atnach
- vs. 1a-27 187 (11 x 17) words before atnach, including the last verse of the chapter, referring to the 12 springs and 70 palm trees, symbolically alluding to the 12 tribes of Israel and the 70 'sons of Israel'. For the 12 sons of Jacob, who accompanied him to Egypt, and his 70 direct descendants, see Exod. 1:1-5. Compare also Observations 3 and 5 in my Analysis of the Song of Moses in Deuteronomy 32 to see how the number 70 reverberates there in various ways.

4. The divine name in 15:1-26

In vs. 1-19, the name יהוה occurs 11 times (1a, 1b, 3a, 3b, 6a, 6c, 11b, 16f, 17d, 18a, 19b) and כב 1x (2a), altogether 12 occurrences. Including the 5 instances in the rest of the narrative framework (21b, 25a (2x), 26a and 26b), the total number in 15:1-26 rises to exactly 17. In order to achieve this number, the author employed the designation כב `my Lord`, in v. 17e, instead of the expected divine name.

The fact that the Song of Moses and its Framework in Deuteronomy have 34 (2 x 17) occurrences of the name YHWH is additional evidence for the conspicuously close relation between the great Song in Exodus 15 at the beginning of the journey through the desert, and the major Song in Deuteronomy 32 at the end of the journey. This fact is one of the items in the massive evidence attesting to the conceptual and compositional unity of the Torah.
Select Bibliography (I owe gratitude to Pieter van der Lugt for part of the list)

F. Perles, “Zur althebräischen Strophik”, WZKM 10 (1896), 103-114
A. Bender, “Das Lied Exodus 15”, ZAW 15 (1903), 1-48
P. Haupt, “Moses’ Song of Triumph”, AJSL 20 (1904), 149-172
H. Schmidt, “Das Meerialied”, ZAW 49 (1931)
M. Rozelaar, “The Song of the Sea”, VT 2 (1952), 221-228
J. D. W. Watts, “The Song of the Sea”, VT 7 (1957), 371-380
G.W. Coats, “The Song of the Sea”, CBQ 31 (1969), 1-17