2. The Blessing of Moses in Deuteronomy 33—Logotechnical Analysis

Guidelines

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

The Blessing of Moses in its Literary Context

As I have shown elsewhere, the Blessing of Moses was secondarily incorporated into the book at a stage when the concluding chapters were already finalized and rounded-off. It appeared that Deuteronomy 31-34, without the Blessing, is a skillfully designed, meticulously constructed numerical composition, in which the divine name numbers 17 and 26 have consistently been woven into the fabric of the text. This is particularly evident in the number of words in the different sections and more particularly in the speeches by Moses and YHWH, as revealed by the logotechnical analysis.

The composition of the Blessing was in all likelihood inspired by the Blessing of Jacob in Genesis 49. In fact, Jacob is explicitly mentioned in 33:4, 10, and 28, which hooks on to 32:9. Its purpose was obviously to boost the function of the Song of Moses as his Farewell Address on the eve of the occupation of the land, which it anticipates in a special way. Two crucial themes link the Blessing not only to the Song of Moses, but also to the other poetic stepping-stones in the Story of Ancient Israel (Genesis-Kings): YHWH's *incomparability* and his *triumphant manifestation* in saving his people and establishing them in their land.

For *YHWH's incomparability*, compare 33:26 with *Deut. 32:39* in the Song of Moses, with *Exod. 15:11* in the Song at the Reed Sea, with *1 Sam. 2:2* in the Song of Hannah, and with *2 Sam. 22:32* in the Song of David. For *YHWH's triumphant manifestation*, compare 33:2-5 with *Exod. 15:1-18*, The Song at the Reed Sea, and *Judg. 5:3-4* in the Song of Deborah.

The Blessing, together with its Framework, was conceived as reflecting a journey by YHWH and his people (explicitly called Jeshurun in 33:5 and 26; compare 32:15) from the far south to the north: from Sinai via Seir, Paran and Kadesh to the land of Canaan. The tribes are presented in such an order as if they were successively occupying the portions of the land allotted to them: **Reuben** east of the Jordan, **Judah** west of the Jordan, with **Levi** as its guest tribe, **Benjamin** north of Judah, with **Joseph** further north, followed by the remaining tribes still further north, mentioned anticlockwise: **Zebulun/Issachar**, **Gad**, **Dan**, **Naphtali**, and **Asher**.[1] In this way the Blessing of Moses helps setting the stage for the story of the occupation of the land.

Special Features of the Blessing of Moses

- As it stands in MT, the Blessing of Moses is from beginning to end a masterpiece of numerical composition. The Blessings (vs. 6-25) have been incorporated with minute care into a psalm-like Framework (vs. 2-5, Canto I, and vs. 26-29, Canto II). The Framework is generally regarded as stemming from an ancient hymn, but frankly, I could not discover a shred of evidence to support this commonly held supposition. On the contrary, the logotechnical evidence and an unbiased study of the content strongly suggest that the Framework was specifically composed to encompass the Blessings.[2]

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[1] Simeon is left out of consideration, probably because it was considered to be part of Judah. For my explanation of the remarkable order of the tribes, see my article "The Tribes in the Blessing of Moses", in: *Language and Meaning: Papers read at the Britisch-Dutch Conference in London, 1973* (Oudtestamentische Studiën 19, 1974), pp. 97-112.

[2] For particulars, see my commentary (in the series De Prediking van het Oude Testament), Vol. III, 283ff.

The **43** words of Canto I are meticulously composed according to the significant formula **43** = **26**a + **17**b, and are in all probability determined by the numerical value of the relevant keyword in the heading, הַבְּרָכָה, 'the blessing' (5+2+20+11+5 = **43**). The **52** (2 x **26**) words of Canto II, on the other hand, may in all likelihood have been determined by the blessing for Levi (**52** words) and for Joseph **(52** words**),** the two most prominent tribes in the Blessing. See further below.

> Canto I, vs. 2-5   **43** words, with **26** before, and **17** after *atnach*
>
> Canto II, vs. 26-29   **52** (2 x **26**) words, as in the Blessings for Levi and Joseph.

- The text of vs. 2-25, Canto I and the Blessings, are carefully composed to constitute a structural unity, being significantly made up of **272** (16 x **17**) words, with **153** (9 x **17**) before, and **119** (7 x **17**) after *atnach.*

  The structural unity of the text comprising the Blessings and Canto II – particularly for the Northern tribes -, is in its turn demonstrated by the **204** (12 x **17**) words of vs. 12-29, which are divided as follows:

  > **68** (4 x **17**) words in vs. 12-17 (used for Benjamin and Joseph)
  >
  > **68** (4 x **17**) words in vs. 18-23 (used for Zebulun-Issachar, Gad, Dan, Naphtali), and
  >
  > **68** (4 x **17**) words in vs. 24-29 (used for Asher and in Canto II).

- The Blessings for Levi and Joseph (excluding the introductions) clearly stand out: they are not only by far the longest, but also of equal length and composed in exactly the same fashion: 8 verselines, **17** cola, and **52** (2 x **26**) words.

- Contrary to the 12 tribal sayings of Jacob in Genesis 49, which are not individually introduced, the 10 blessings of Moses are all introduced except the blessing for Reuben. The 2-word introductory formula, וּלְ····· אָמַר, "and for …. he said", is used throughout, but the Judah blessing (v. 7) has a differently phrased introduction: וְזֹאת לִיהוּדָה וַיֹּאמַר, "And this is for Judah; and he said". This can be explained as a rhetorical device to focus attention on Judah as the most important tribe besides the 'big ones', Levi and Joseph.

- There are altogether not 12 but 10 blessings, because the tribe of Simeon is left out of consideration and Zebulun and Issachar are taken together. Moreover, the tribes are arranged in a different order: Reuben, Judah, Levi, Benjamin, Joseph, Zebulun-Issachar, Gad, Dan, Naphtali, and Asher. As I have demonstrated elsewhere, the order is determined by geographical principles, the aim of which was to state the positioning of the tribes in the Promised Land. [3]

- In addition to the meaningful centre of the poem as a whole (v. 16a-b), the two parts of the framework have their own meaningful centre (v. 3 and v. 28 respectively) in terms of verselines, cola, and words, which coincide precisely. See Observations 1 and 2.

- The blessing for Joseph, vs. 13-17, in particular, has been composed with minute care to express the fullness and continuity of the bounties to come upon the head of Joseph. The central positioning of the **52**-word Joseph blessing in vs. 13-17 (54 words including the introduction) – preceded by **156** (6 x **26**) words, and followed by **136** (8 x **17**) words - highlights Joseph's prominence and special status. See Observation 4 below.

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[3] See my study "The Tribes in the Blessing of Moses", cited in note 1. Since the tribe of Levi did not have land of its own, I mistakenly argued that originally Levi was left out of consideration and that the blessing of Levi was later inserted into the Judah blessing by a Levitical 'glossator'. For a more nuanced view, compare my Commentary (De Prediking van het Oude Testament, 1997), ad loc.

Logotechnical analysis

- Columns **a** and **b** show the number of words before and after the atnach.
- Column **c**: words in the speeches; **d**: words in the heading and the introductions.
- To the right of the Hebrew text you'll find the numbering of the verselines.

	Hebrew	vl	Total	a	b	c	d
וְזֹאת הַבְּרָכָה (5+11+20) **43** (5+2+20) הַבְּרָכָה 1	וְזֹאת הַבְּרָכָ֗ה	1	2	2			2
the number of	אֲשֶׁ֨ר בֵּרַ֥ךְ מֹשֶׁ֛ה אִ֥ישׁ הָאֱלֹהִ֖ים		5	5			5
words in Canto I, vs. 2-5	אֶת־בְּנֵ֥י יִשְׂרָאֵ֑ל^		3	3			3
	לִפְנֵ֖י מוֹתֽוֹ׃		2		2		2
	Total, v. 1		12	= 10	+ 2	= 0	+ 12
2	וַיֹּאמַ֗ר		1	1			1
	יְהוָ֞ה מִסִּינַ֥י בָּא֙	1	3	3		3	
	וְזָרַ֤ח מִשֵּׂעִיר֙ לָ֔מוֹ		3	3		3	
	הוֹפִ֙יעַ֙ מֵהַ֣ר פָּארָ֔ן		3	3		3	
* See note below chart	וְאָתָ֖ה מֵרִבְבֹ֣ת קֹ֑דֶשׁ^	2	3	3		3	
	מִֽימִינ֕וֹ אֵֽשְׁדָּ֖ת לָֽמוֹ׃		3		3	3	
	Total, v. 2		16	= 13	+ 3	= 15	+ 1
3 Middle words of Canto I	אַ֚ף חֹבֵ֣ב עַמִּ֔ים	3	3	3		3	
(**43** = 16 + 11 + 16)	כָּל־קְדֹשָׁ֖יו בְּיָדֶ֑ךָ^		3	3		3	
Middle verselines (6=2+2+2)	וְהֵם֙ תֻּכּ֣וּ לְרַגְלֶ֔ךָ	4	3		3	3	
Middle cola (14 = 5 + 4 + 5)	יִשָּׂ֖א מִדַּבְּרֹתֶֽיךָ׃		2		2	2	
	Total, v. 3		11	= 6	+ 5	= 11	+ 0
Canticle I.1	Total, v. 2-3		27	= 19	+ 8	= **26**	+ 1
	Total, v. 1-3		**39**	= 29	+ 10	= **26**	+ 13
4	תּוֹרָ֥ה צִוָּה־לָ֖נוּ מֹשֶׁ֑ה^	5	4	4		4	
	מוֹרָשָׁ֖ה קְהִלַּ֥ת יַעֲקֹֽב׃		3		3	3	
	Total, v. 4		7	= 4	+ 3	= 7	+ 0
	Total, v. 2-4		**34**	= 23	+ 11	= 33	+ 1
5 יְשֻׁרוּן Cf. v. 26a	וַיְהִ֥י בִישֻׁר֖וּן מֶ֑לֶךְ^	6	3	3		3	
	בְּהִתְאַסֵּף֙ רָ֣אשֵׁי עָ֔ם		3		3	3	
יִשְׂרָאֵל and עָם, cf. v. 29	יַ֖חַד שִׁבְטֵ֥י יִשְׂרָאֵֽל׃		3		3	3	
in reverse order	Total, v. 5		9	= 3	+ 6	= 9	+ 0
Canticle I.2	Total, v. 4-5		16	= 7	+ 9	= 16	+ 0
Canto I	**Total, v. 2-5**		**43**	= **26**	+ **17**	= 42	+ 1
	Total, v. 1-5		55	= 36	+ 19	= 42	+ 13
6 Reuben: 7 words	יְחִ֥י רְאוּבֵן֙ וְאַל־יָמֹ֑ת^	7	4	4		4	
	וִיהִ֥י מְתָ֖יו מִסְפָּֽר׃ ס		3		3	3	
	Blessing for Reuben, v. 6		7	= 4	+ 3	= **7**	+ 0
	Total, v. 3-6		34	= 17	+ 17	= 34	+ 0
7 Judah: 13 words	וְזֹ֣את לִֽיהוּדָה֮		2	2			2
	וַיֹּאמַר֒		1	1			1

שְׁמַ֤ע יְהוָה֙ ק֣וֹל יְהוּדָ֔ה	8	4	4			4		
וְאֶל־עַמּ֖וֹ תְּבִיאֶ֑נּוּ^		3	3			3		
יָדָיו֙ רָ֣ב ל֔וֹ	9	3			3	3		
וְעֵ֥זֶר מִצָּרָ֖יו תִּהְיֶֽה: **ס**		3			3	3		
Total, v. 7		16	= 10	+ 6	= **13**	+ 3		
Blessing for Reuben/Judah, v. 6-7		**23**	= 14	+ 9	= 20	+ 3		
Total, v. 5-7		32	= **17**	+ 15	= 29	+ 3		
Canto I + Blessings for Reuben/Judah, v. 1-7		78	= 50	+ 28	= 62	+ 16		
8 Levi: **52** (2 x **26**) words		וּלְלֵוִ֣י[3] אָמַ֔ר	2	2				2
Compare Joseph תֻּמֶּ֥יךָ וְאוּרֶ֖יךָ לְאִ֣ישׁ חֲסִידֶ֑ךָ^	10	4	4			4		
אֲשֶׁ֤ר נִסִּיתוֹ֙ בְּמַסָּ֔ה		3			3	3		
תְּרִיבֵ֖הוּ עַל־מֵ֥י מְרִיבָֽה:		4			4	4		
Total, v. 8		13	= 6	+ 7	= 11	+ 2		
הָאֹמֵ֞ר לְאָבִ֤יו וּלְאִמּוֹ֙	11	3	3			3		
לֹ֣א רְאִיתִ֔יו		2	2			2		
וְאֶת־אֶחָיו֙ לֹ֣א הִכִּ֔יר	12	4	4			4		
וְאֶת־אֶחָיו֙ לֹ֣א הִכִּ֑יר^		4	4			4		
כִּ֤י שָֽׁמְרוּ֙ אִמְרָתֶ֔ךָ	13	3			3	3		
וּבְרִֽיתְךָ֖ יִנְצֹֽרוּ:		2			2	2		
Total, v. 9		18	= 13	+ 5	= 18	+ 0		
יוֹר֤וּ מִשְׁפָּטֶ֙יךָ֙ לְיַעֲקֹ֔ב	14	3	3			3		
וְתוֹרָתְךָ֖ לְיִשְׂרָאֵ֑ל^		2	2			2		
יָשִׂ֤ימוּ קְטוֹרָה֙ בְּאַפֶּ֔ךָ	15	3			3	3		
וְכָלִ֖יל עַל־מִזְבְּחֶֽךָ:		3			3	3		
Total, v. 10		11	= 5	+ 6	= 11	+ 0		
בָּרֵ֤ךְ יְהוָה֙ חֵיל֔וֹ	16	3	3			3		
וּפֹ֥עַל יָדָ֖יו תִּרְצֶ֑ה^		3	3			3		
מְחַ֤ץ מָתְנַ֙יִם֙ קָמָ֔יו וּמְשַׂנְאָ֖יו	17	4			4	4		
מִן־יְקוּמֽוּן: **ס**		2			2	2		
Total, v. 11		12	= 6	+ 6	= 12	+ 0		
Blessing for Levi, v. 8-11		54	= 30	+ 24	= **52**	+ 2		
12 Benjamin: 12 words		לְבִנְיָמִ֣ן[4] אָמַ֔ר	2	2				2
יְדִ֣יד יְהֹוָ֔ה	18	2	2			2		
יִשְׁכֹּ֥ן לָבֶ֖טַח עָלָ֑יו^		3	3			3		
חֹפֵ֤ף עָלָיו֙ כָּל־הַיּ֔וֹם	19	4			4	4		
וּבֵ֥ין כְּתֵפָ֖יו שָׁכֵֽן: **ס**		3			3	3		
Total, v. 12		14	= 7	+ 7	= **12**	+ 2		
Blessing for Benjamin, v. 11-12		**26**	= 13	+ 13	= 24	+ 2		
Blessings for Levi-Benjamin, v. 8-12		**68**	= 37	+ 31	= 64	+ 4		
Blessings for Judah-Benjamin, v. 6-12		**91**	= **51**	+ 40	= 84	+ 7		
For Reuben-Benjamin + Canto I, v. 1-12		156	= 87	+ 59	= 126	+ 20		

Note	Hebrew	v.	Total				
13 Joseph: **52** (2 x **26**) words	וּלְיוֹסֵ֣ף[5] אָמַ֔ר		2	2			[2]
Compare Levi	מְבֹרֶ֣כֶת יְהֹוָ֖ה אַרְצ֑וֹ^	20	3	3			3
Seven bounties (1-7)	מִמֶּ֤גֶד שָׁמַ֙יִם֙ מִטָּ֔ל[1]		3	3		3	3
of Joseph's land	וּמִתְּה֖וֹם רֹבֶ֥צֶת תָּֽחַת[2]		3	3		3	3
14	וּמִמֶּ֖גֶד תְּבוּאֹ֥ת שָֽׁמֶשׁ[3]^	21	3	3			3
	וּמִמֶּ֖גֶד גֶּ֥רֶשׁ יְרָחִֽים[4]		3		3	3	
Total, v. 13-14			**17** = 8 + 9 = 15 + 2				
15	וּמֵרֹ֖אשׁ הַרְרֵי־קֶ֑דֶם[5]^	22	3	3			3
	וּמִמֶּ֖גֶד גִּבְע֥וֹת עוֹלָֽם[6]		3		3	3	
16 Mid. vs.line (22+1+22)	וּמִמֶּ֕גֶד אֶ֖רֶץ וּמְלֹאָ֑הּ[7]	23	3	3			3
Two middle words of vs. 2-29	וּרְצ֥וֹן שֹׁכְנִ֣י סְנֶ֑ה^		3	3			3
(324 = 161 + [2] + 161)	תָּב֤וֹאתָה֙ לְרֹ֣אשׁ יוֹסֵ֔ף	24	3		3	3	
	וּלְקׇדְקֹ֖ד נְזִ֥יר אֶחָֽיו		3		3	3	
Total, v. 16			12 = 6 + 6 = 12 + 0				
Total, v. 13-16			35 = **17** + 18 = 33 + 2				
17	בְּכ֨וֹר שׁוֹר֜וֹ הָדָ֣ר ל֗וֹ	25	4	4			4
	וְקַרְנֵ֤י רְאֵם֙ קַרְנָ֔יו		3	3			3
	בָּהֶ֗ם עַמִּ֛ים יְנַגַּ֥ח	26	3	3			3
	יַחְדָּ֖ו אַפְסֵי־אָ֑רֶץ^		3	3			3
	וְהֵם֙ רִבְב֣וֹת אֶפְרַ֔יִם	27	3		3	3	
	וְהֵ֖ם אַלְפֵ֥י מְנַשֶּֽׁה ס		3		3	3	
Total, v. 17			19 = 13 + 6 = 19 + 0				
Blessing for Joseph, Total, v. 13-17			**54** = 30 + 24 = **52** + 2				
Blessings for Benjamin-Joseph, v. 12-17			**68** = 37 + 31 = 64 + 4				
18 Zebulun-Issachar: 19 words	וְלִזְבוּלֻ֣ן[6] אָמַ֔ר		2	2			[2]
	שְׂמַ֥ח זְבוּלֻ֖ן בְּצֵאתֶ֑ךָ^	28	3	3			3
	וְיִשָּׂשכָ֖ר בְּאֹהָלֶֽיךָ		2		2	2	
19	עַמִּים֙ הַר־יִקְרָ֔אוּ	29	3	3			3
	שָׁ֚ם יִזְבְּח֣וּ זִבְחֵי־צֶ֑דֶק^		4	4			4
	כִּ֣י שֶׁ֤פַע יַמִּים֙ יִינָ֔קוּ	30	4		4	4	
	וּשְׂפֻנֵ֖י טְמ֥וּנֵי חֽוֹל ס		3		3	3	
Blessing for Zebulun/Issachar, v. 18-19			21 = 12 + 9 = **19** + 2				
20 Gad: **26** words	וּלְגָ֣ד[7] אָמַ֔ר		2	2			[2]
	בָּר֖וּךְ מַרְחִ֣יב גָּ֑ד^	31	3	3			3
	כְּלָבִ֣יא שָׁכֵ֑ן		2		2	2	
	וְטָרַ֥ף זְר֖וֹעַ אַף־קׇדְקֹֽד		4		4	4	
Total, v. 20			11 = 5 + 6 = 9 + 2				
21	וַיַּ֤רְא רֵאשִׁית֙ ל֔וֹ	32	3	3			3
	כִּי־שָׁ֛ם חֶלְקַ֥ת מְחֹקֵ֖ק סָפ֑וּן^		5	5			5
	וַיֵּתֵא֙ רָ֣אשֵׁי עָ֔ם	33	3		3	3	

Label	Ln	Total				
צִדְקַ֤ת יְהוָה֙ עָשָׂ֔ה		3		3	3	
וּמִשְׁפָּטָ֖יו עִם־יִשְׂרָאֵֽל׃ ס		3		3	3	
Total, v. 21		**17** = 8 + 9 = 17 + 0				
Blessing for Gad, v. 20-21		**28** = 13 + 15 = **26** + 2				
Blessings for Judah-Gad, v. 7-21		**187** = 102 + 85 = 174 + 13				
22 Dan: 6 words — וּלְדָ֤ן[8] אָמַ֔ר		2	2			[2]
דָּ֣ן גּ֤וּר אַרְיֵ֑ה^	34	3	3		3	
יְזַנֵּ֖ק מִן־הַבָּשָֽׁן׃		3		3	3	
Blessing for Dan, v. 22		**8** = 5 + 3 = **6** + 2				
23 Naphtali: 9 words — וּלְנַפְתָּלִ֣י[9] אָמַ֔ר		2	2			[2]
נַפְתָּלִי֙ שְׂבַ֣ע רָצ֔וֹן	35	3	3		3	
וּמָלֵ֖א בִּרְכַּ֣ת יְהוָ֑ה^		3	3		3	
יָ֥ם וְדָר֖וֹם יְרָֽשָׁה׃ ס		3		3	3	
Blessing for Naphtali, v. 23		**11** = 8 + 3 = **9** + 2				
Blessings for Zebulun-Naphtali, v. 18-23		**68** = 38 + 30 = 60 + 8				
24 Asher: 14 words — וּלְאָשֵׁ֣ר[10] אָמַ֔ר		2	2			[2]
בָּר֥וּךְ מִבָּנִ֖ים אָשֵׁ֑ר^	36	3	3		3	
יְהִ֥י רְצוּי֙ אֶחָ֔יו		3		3	3	
וְטֹבֵ֥ל בַּשֶּׁ֖מֶן רַגְלֽוֹ׃		3		3	3	
25 — בַּרְזֶ֣ל וּנְחֹ֔שֶׁת מִנְעָלֶ֑יךָ^	37	3	3		3	
וּכְיָמֶ֖יךָ דָּבְאֶֽךָ׃		2		2	2	
Blessing for Asher, v. 24-25		**16** = 8 + 8 = **14** + 2				
The Blessings, Total, v. 6-25		**229** = 127 + **102** = 210 + 19				
Canto I and the Blessings, Total, v. 2-25		**272** = 153 + 119 = 252 + 20				
26 Cf. v. 5a, 28, 29 יְשֻׁרֽוּן — אֵ֤ין כָּאֵ֣ל יְשֻׁר֑וּן^	38	3	3		3	
רֹכֵ֤ב שָׁמַ֨יִם֙ בְּעֶזְרֶ֔ךָ		3		3	3	
וּבְגַאֲוָת֖וֹ שְׁחָקִֽים׃		2		2	2	
27 — מְעֹנָה֙ אֱלֹ֣הֵי קֶ֔דֶם	39	3	3		3	
וּמִתַּ֖חַת זְרֹעֹ֣ת עוֹלָ֑ם^		3	3		3	
וַיְגָ֧רֶשׁ מִפָּנֶ֛יךָ אוֹיֵ֖ב	40	3		3	3	
וַיֹּ֥אמֶר הַשְׁמֵֽד׃		2		2	2	
Total, v. 26-27		19 = 9 + 10 = 19 + 0				
Total, v. 24-27		35 = **17** + 18 = 33 + 2				
28 Middle words of Canto II — וַיִּשְׁכֹּן֩ יִשְׂרָאֵ֨ל בֶּ֜טַח	41	3	3		3	
* (**52** = 19 + 14 + 19) — בָּדָ֤ד עֵ֣ין יַעֲקֹ֔ב		3	3		3	
Mid. vs.lines (8=3+2+3) — אֶל־אֶ֖רֶץ דָּגָ֣ן וְתִיר֑וֹשׁ^	42	4	4		4	
Middle cola (18=7+4+7) — אַף־שָׁמָ֖יו יַֽעַרְפוּ־טָֽל׃		4		4	4	
Words spoken *about* Israel Total, v. 28		14 = 10 + 4 = 14 + 0				
Canticle II.1 v. 26-28		33 = 19 + 14 = 33 + 0				

	Hebrew	v.					
29	אַשְׁרֶיךָ יִשְׂרָאֵל	43	2	2		2	
and עַם יִשְׂרָאֵל, cf. v. 5	מִי כָמוֹךָ		2	2		2	
in reverse order	עַם נוֹשַׁע בַּיהוָה	44	3	3		3	
	מָגֵן עֶזְרֶךָ		2	2		2	
	וַאֲשֶׁר־חֶרֶב גַּאֲוָתֶךָ^	45	3	3		3	
	וְיִכָּחֲשׁוּ אֹיְבֶיךָ לָךְ		3		3	3	
	וְאַתָּה עַל־בָּמוֹתֵימוֹ תִדְרֹךְ׃ ס		4		4	4	

Canticle II.2 Total, v. 29	19	= 12	+ 7	= 19	+ 0
Total, v. 28-29	33	= 22	+ 11	= 33	+ 0
Canto II Total, v. 26-29	52	= 31	+ 21	= 52	+ 0
Blessing for Asher and Canto II, v. 24-29	68	= 39	+ 29	= 66	+ 2
For Zebulun-Asher and Canto II, v. 18-29	136	= 77	+ 59	= 126	+ 10
The entire poetical body, Total, v. 2-29	324	= 184	+ 140	= 304	+ 20
Including the heading, Total, v. 1-29	336	= 194	+ 142	= 304	+ 32

* In 2d, MT has מֵרִבְבֹת קֹדֶשׁ, usually translated 'from the ten thousands of holy ones'. LXX has 'from the ten thousands of Kadesh', but we probably have to do with a geographical reference: either Riboboth Kadesh, with D.L. Christensen (2002), or, reading with Van der Woude (1994) and others מִמְּרִבַת קָדֵשׁ, 'from Meribath Kadesh'. Whatever the case may be, the suggested emendation does not affect the number of words. In v. 2e, אֵשְׁדָּת is written (Ketib) as one word, although it is suggested to read it as two words. However, I maintain the Ketib reading, because the introduction of an extra word would play havoc with the numerical structure of the text in many ways. The reader can figure out for himself what happens if we read אֵשׁ דָּת.

* In v. 28b the word עֵין is problematic, since one expects a verb parallel to וַיִּשְׁכֹּן in 28a. With Christensen and others, I read עָן, from the verb עון, 'to dwell' (see *HALOT*, Volume 2, 800a). Compare מָעוֹן, 'dwelling'.

Observations

1. In terms of the 324 words of the poem as a whole, its arithmetic centre is constituted by the two words שֹׁכְנִי סְנֶה, 'the One Dwelling in a Bush", in v. 16b (161 + 2 + 161). The meaningfulness of the middle words lies in the fact that they focus specifically on YHWH as the source of all the blessings. The word סְנֶה, 'bush', was obviously chosen to allude to the burning bush, where Moses met YHWH, but it was also meant to pun upon סִינַי, 'Sinai', in order to call the attention back to the Sinai event where Moses proclaimed the law (note the reference to the law in v. 4).
The two meaningful middle words fall within the middle verseline (16a-b) of the poem as a whole (45 = 22 + 1 + 22), which may be considered its larger meaningful centre:

וּמִמֶּגֶד אֶרֶץ וּמְלֹאָהּ   Yes, with the bounty of the earth and its fullness

וּרְצוֹן שֹׁכְנִי סְנֶה   And the favour of the One Dwelling in a Bush.

The central verseline falls within the blessing for Joseph (vs. 13-17), where it forms the culmination of the *seven* bounties of the land of Joseph, which are complemented by the personal favour of the God of Moses. The *seven* bounties, with which YHWH blesses the land, are arranged in a menorah pattern, to which the favour of YHWH is added as an extra, most bounteous blessing.

1. With the bounty of the heavens in the form of dew
2. And with that from the deep, lying beneath
3. And with the bounty of the crop of the sun
4. And with the bounty of the yield of the months
5. And with that from the top of the ancient mountains
6. And with the bounty of the everlasting hills
7a. And with the bounty of the earth and its fullness
7b. And the favour of the One Dwelling in a Bush.

Note the iterative use of 'bounty' (5x) and the *seven* occurrences of the copula 'and', to express the idea of continuity and fullness.

2. A feature the poem shares with many psalms is that it has distinct meaningful centres in sub-sections, in addition to its main meaningful centre: in this case, in both parts of the framework, Cantos I and II.

In terms of its **43** words, the arithmetic centre of **Canto I** is constituted by the **11** words in v. 3 (43 = 16 + 11 + 16), which coincides precisely with the **2** middle verselines (6 = 2 + 2 + 2) and the **4** middle cola (14 = 5 + 4 + 5). This strongly indicates that v. 3 is its deliberately designed meaningful centre:

אַף חֹבֵב עַמִּים כָּל־קְדֹשָׁיו בְּיָדֶךָ^

וְהֵם תֻּכּוּ לְרַגְלֶךָ יִשָּׂא מִדַּבְּרֹתֶיךָ׃

Indeed, he continues loving (his) peoples: All his holy ones are at your hand
Yes, they sit at your feet   and carry out your instructions.

The focus on the love of YHWH for the tribes of Israel (his 'peoples') is a very appropriate expression of the gist of the introductory part of the framework to the tribal blessings. The word 'peoples' evidently anticipates the tribes, which are explicitly referred to in v. 5 as 'the people' and 'the tribes of Israel'. This makes Canto I (vs. 2-5) a most fitting introduction to the Blessing (6-25) and there is no doubt in my mind that it was intentionally composed for this purpose.

Note that the terms 'people' and 'Israel', here at the end of Canto I, return (in the reverse order) at the end of Canto II, in v. 29. This also applies to 'the assembly of Jacob' in v. 4 and the reference to 'Jacob' as synonym of Israel in v. 29. In much the same way the designation 'Jeshurun', here in v. 5, reappears at the beginning of Canto II, in v. 26, clearly linking Canto I to Canto II and demonstrating the unity of the three main parts of the poem, Canto I, the Blessings, and Canto II. Note also the word 'dew' that is occurring in v. 13 and repeated in v. 28d.

In terms of its **52** words, the arithmetic centre of **Canto II** is constituted by the **14** words in v. 28 (**52** = 19 + 14 + 19), which likewise coincides precisely with the **2** middle verselines (8 = 3 + 2 + 3) and the **4** middle cola (18 = 7 + 4 + 7):

וַיִּשְׁכֹּן יִשְׂרָאֵל בֶּטַח בָּדָד עֵין יַעֲקֹב

אֶל־אֶרֶץ דָּגָן וְתִירוֹשׁ ^ אַף־שָׁמָיו יַעַרְפוּ טָל׃

So Israel lives securely,   alone dwells Jacob
In a land of grain and wine.   Indeed, his skies drip with dew.

Its meaningfulness lies in the message that it is only because YHWH is their God that the Israelites live in security. To live in safety and security is the result of his blessing.

3. Including the two surrounding cantos, there are altogether 12 different utterances, which are obviously determined by the traditional twelve tribes of Israel. The end of each tribal utterance is marked by a *Parashah Setumah* (ס), except the blessing for Dan and Asher. The following survey shows their numerical features:

Utterance		Number of words		Total, including introductions
vs. 2-5	Canto I	42		**43** (**26** + **17**)
vs. 6	Reuben	7		7
vs. 7	Judah	13		16
vs. 8-11	Levi	**52** (2 x **26**)		54 ⎫
vs. 12	Benjamin	12		14 ⎬ **68** (4 x **17**)
vs. 13-17	Joseph	**52** (2 x **26**)	**272**	54 ⎭ **68** (4 x **17**)
vs. 18-19	Zebulun/Issachar	19	(16x**17**)	21 ⎫
vs. 20-21	Gad	**26**		28 ⎪
vs. 22	Dan	6		8 ⎬ **68** (4 x **17**)
vs. 23	Naphtali	9		11 ⎭
vs. 24-25	Asher	14		16 ⎫
vs. 26-29	Canto II	**52** (2 x **26**)		**52** ⎭ **68** (4 x **17**).

The manifest way in which the two divine name numbers have been used to give structure to the text is in itself most remarkable. Even more impressive, on another level, is the gematric value of the names of the tribes taken together as they stand in the text. Note that the names of Reuben and Issachar lack the preposition 'for', and that the names of Judah and Benjamin lack the copula 'and' (in my opinion for gematric reasons). We get the following picture:

<u>Reuben</u>	20 + 1 + 6 + 2 + 14 =	**43**
<u>for Judah</u>	12 + 10 + 5 + 6 + 4 + 5 =	**42**
<u>and for Levi</u>	6 + 12 + 12 + 6 + 10 =	**46**
<u>for Benjamin</u>	12 + 2 + 14 + 10 + 13 + 14 =	**65**
<u>and for Joseph</u>	6 + 12 + 10 + 6 + 15 + 17 =	**66**
<u>and for Zebulun</u>	6 + 12 + 7 + 2 + 12 + 14 =	**59**
<u>and Issachar</u>	6 + 10 + 21 + 21 + 11 + 20 =	**89**
<u>and for Gad</u>	6 + 12 + 3 + 4 =	**25**
<u>and for Dan</u>	6 + 12 + 4 + 14 =	**36**
<u>and for Naphtali</u>	6 + 12 + 14 + 17 + 22 + 12 + 10 =	**93**
<u>and for Asher</u>	6 + 12 + 1 + 21 + 20 =	**60**
Total gematric value of the eleven words		**624** (24 x **26**).

This striking figure is very reminiscent of what I discovered about the five rather enigmatic geographic names in Deut. 1:1 (see my Commentary [1987], Vol. 1A, p. 73):

<u>Paran</u>	17 + 1 + 20 + 14 =	**52** (2 x **26**)
<u>Tophel</u>	22 + 17 + 1 =	**51** (3 x **17**)
<u>and Laban</u>	6 + 12 + 2 + 14 =	**34** (2 x **17**)
<u>and Hazeroth</u>	6 + 8 + 18 + 20 + 22 =	6 + **68** (4 x **17**)
<u>and Dizahab</u>	6 + 4 + 10 + 7 + 5 + 2 =	**34** (2 x **17**).

4. Grouping together the two tribes in the east and south (Reuben and Judah), the three in the middle (Levi, Benjamin, and Joseph), the other northern tribes in the north-east (Zebulun, Issachar, and Gad), and those in the far north and north-west (Dan, Naphtali, and Asher), we may discern *four* geographically determined groups.

And if we now also differentiate between the two 'big tribes' (Levi and Joseph, with Benjamin in between), we have *five* groups, which can be divided in two ways depending on the positioning of Benjamin (with Levi, or with Joseph?):

Reuben and Judah, for which 23 words are used

Levi, for which 54 words are used

Joseph and Benjamin, for which **68** words are used

Zebulun, Issachar, and Gad, for which 49 words are used

Dan, Naphtali, and Asher, for which 35 words are used,

or

Reuben and Judah (23 words)

Levi and Benjamin (**68** words)

Joseph (54 words)

Zebulun, Issachar, and Gad (49 words)

Dan, Naphtali, and Asher (35 words).

Whatever the case may be, we may now divide the entire text (including the framework) into *seven* sections outlined in a menorah pattern, with either Joseph and Benjamin, or Joseph at the centre. Seeing the central position of the Joseph blessing, which contains not only the 2-word arithmetic centre within the middle verseline of the poem, but also its meaningful centre, I opt for positioning Joseph at the centre. The spectacular features of the Joseph blessing, as has been demonstrated above, undergird this option. And finally, the fact that the blessing for Joseph (vs. 13-17) with its 54 words (Introduction 2 words, Blessing **52**) is encompassed by **156** (6 x **26**) words in vs. 1-12, and **136** (8 x **17**) words in vs. 18-29 strengthens its central position.

This envelope technique is very reminiscent of Psalm 80, where the **52**-word Lament for the vine and the vineyard (which is a metaphor for Joseph!) in 80:9-16 is encompassed by the two parts of the **78**-word prayer (3 x **26**) for restoration, 80:2-8 and 17-20. See Observation 3 in my Analysis of Psalm 80. It is difficult to explain this obvious interdependence between Psalm 80 and the Blessing of Moses, but, seeing the secondary character of Deuteronomy 33, I would suggest that the author of the Blessing of Moses was familiar with the Asaphite Psalm 80. In light of the prominence given to the tribe of Levi in Deuteronomy 33 (with a **52**-word blessing!) this author/redactor may have been an Asaphite Levite.

This is the menorah structure with the Blessing for Joseph in central position:

vs. 1-5	Introductory words and Canto I	
vs. 6-7	Blessings for Reuben and Judah	**156** (6 x **26**)
vs. 8-12	Blessings for Levi and Benjamin	
vs. 13-17	**Blessing for Joseph, 54** words (2 + **52**)	
vs. 18-21	Blessings for Zebulun/Issachar and Gad	
vs. 22-25	Blessings for Dan, Naphtali, and Asher	**136** (8 x **17**)
vs. 26-29	Praise for the God and people of Israel: Canto II	

5. The divine name numbers **17** and **26** and their multiples are interwoven in the text in the following way (some of which may be due to coincidence):

vs. 1-3	**39** words, with **26** in Canticle I.1 and **13** in the introduction
vs. 2-4	**34** (2 x **17**) words in total
vs. 2-5	**43** words, with **26** before, and **17** after *atnach*
vs. 3-6	**34** words, with **17** before, and **17** after *atnach*
vs. 5-7	**17** words before *atnach*
vs. 1-7	**78** (3 x **26**) words in total
vs. 8-11	**52** (2 x **26**) words in the blessing for Levi
vs. 11-12	**26** words, with **13** before, and **13** after *atnach*
vs. 8-12	**68** (4 x **17**) words in the blessings for Levi and Benjamin
vs. 6-12	**51** (3 x **17**) words before *atnach*
vs. 1-12	**156** (6 x **26**) words in total
vs. 13-14	**17** words in total

vs. 13-16	**17** words before *atnach*
vs. 13-17	**52** (2 x **26**) words in the blessing for Joseph
vs. 12-17	**68** (4 x **17**) words in the blessings for Benjamin and Joseph
vs. 21	**17** words in total
vs. 20-21	**26** words in the blessing for Gad
vs. 7-21	**187** (**11**x**17**) words: **102** (6x**17**) before, **85** (5x**17**) after *atnach*
vs. 18-23	**68** (4 x **17**) words in total (Zebulun-Naphtali)
vs. 6-25	**102** (6 x **17**) words after *atnach* in all blessings together
vs. 2-25	**272** (16x**17**): **153** (9x**17**) before, and **119** (7x**17**) after *atnach*
vs. 24-27	**17** words before *atnach*
vs. 26-29	**52** (2 x **26**) words in total in Canto II
vs. 18-29	**136** (8 x **17**) words in total after the blessing for Joseph.

Conspicuous occurrences of the number **11** and its multiples (note that **33** occurs 5x and happens to be the gematric value of the root *brk,* 'to bless' [2 + 20 + 11]):

vs. 3	**11** words in the meaningful centre of Canto I
vs. 2-4	**33** words in Canticle I.1, excluding the introductory formula
vs. 1-5	**55** words altogether in the heading and Canto I
vs. 13-16	**33** words in the blessing (Column c)
vs. 20	**11** words used in the first part of the blessing for Gad
vs. 23	**11** words used in the blessing for Naphtali
vs. 24-27	**33** words in total (Column c)
vs. 26-28	**33** words in Canticle II.1
vs. 28-29	**33** words in total (Column c)

6. The name יהוה occurs altogether 8 times: 2x in the framework (2a and 29c, where it clearly functions as a device for inclusion) and 6x in the Blessings: for Judah (v. 7), Levi (v. 11), Benjamin (v. 12), Joseph (v. 13), Gad (v. 21), and Naphtali (v. 23). In v. 26 we find אֵל, 'God', and in v. 27 אֱלֹהִים, which occurs also in the heading (v. 1).

Bibliography

For an extensive bibliography, see Duane L. Christensen's commentary *Deuteronomy 21:10-34:12* (Word Biblical Commentary, 6B), Nashville 2002, pp. 831-2, to which may be added:

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