

## 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 with other poetic literary stepping-stones in the Deuteronomistic History: 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**.<sup>1</sup> 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.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> 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 British-Dutch Conference in London, 1973* (Oudtestamentische Studiën 19, 1974), pp. 97-112.

<sup>2</sup> 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 = 26a + 17b**, 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, **וַיֹּאמֶר** ..... **וַיֵּלֶךְ**, “and for .... he said”, is used throughout, but the Judah blessing (v. 7) has a differently phrased introduction: **וַיֵּזַבְחֵהָ לַיהוָה וַיֹּאמֶר**, “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.<sup>3</sup>
- 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 the composition – 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.

<sup>3</sup> 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**.

		Total	a	b	c	d
1	וְנָאֵת הַבְּרָכָה = 43 (5+2+20+11+5)	2	2			2
	אֲשֶׁר בִּרְךְ מֹשֶׁה אִישׁ הָאֱלֹהִים	5	5			5
	the number of words in Canto I, vs. 2-5	3	3			3
	אֶת־בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל	2		2		2
	לְפָנָי מוֹתָו:					
	Total, v. 1	12	= 10	+ 2	= 0	+ 12
2	וַיֹּאמֶר	1	1			1
	יְהוָה מְסִינֵי בָא	3	3		3	
	וְזָרַח מִשְׁעִיר לָמוֹ	3	3		3	
	הוֹפִיעַ מִתֵּר פְּאֶרֶן	3	3		3	
	* See note below chart וְאַתָּה מְרַבֵּב קִדְשֶׁךָ	2	3	3	3	
	מִיְמֵינוֹ אֲשֶׁרְתָּ לָמוֹ:	3		3	3	
	Total, v. 2	16	= 13	+ 3	= 15	+ 1
3	Middle words of Canto I	3	3		3	
	(43 = 16 + 11 + 16)	3	3		3	
	Middle verselines (6=2+2+2)	4	3	3	3	
	Middle cola (14 = 5 + 4 + 5)	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	תוֹרַה צְוִיה־לָנוּ מִשְׁתָּה	5	4	4	4	
	מוֹרֶשֶׁת קַהֲלַת יַעֲקֹב:	3		3	3	
	Total, v. 4	7	= 4	+ 3	= 7	+ 0
	Total, v. 2-4	34	= 23	+ 11	= 33	+ 1
5	וַיְהִי בִישְׂרֹון מְלֻדָּה	6	3	3	3	
	בְּהִתְאַסְּפָה רֵאשֵׁי עָם	3		3	3	
	יְחַד שִׁבְטֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל:	3		3	3	
	עַם and יִשְׂרָאֵל, cf. v. 29					
	in reverse order	9	= 3	+ 6	= 9	+ 0
	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	7	4	4	4	
	וַיְהִי רְאוּבֵן וְאַל־יָמָת	3		3	3	
	וַיְהִי מִתִּיּוֹ מִסְפָּר: ס					
	Blessing for Reuben, v. 6	7	= 4	+ 3	= 7	+ 0
	Total, v. 3-6	34	= 17	+ 17	= 34	+ 0
7	Judah: 13 words	2	2			2
	וְנָאֵת לַיהוּדָה	1	1			1
	וַיֹּאמֶר					

	8	שְׁמַע יְהוָה קוֹל יְהוֹדָה	4	4	4	
		וְאֶל־עַמּוֹ תְּבִיאֵנִי	3	3	3	
	9	יָדִיו רַב לֹ	3	3	3	
		וְעֹזר מִצָּרָיו תַּהַיְהֶה: ׀	3	3	3	
		Total, v. 7	16	= 10	+ 6 = 13	+ 3
		<b>Blessing for Judah, v. 6-7</b>	23	= 14	+ 9 = 20	+ 3
		Total, v. 5-7	32	= 17	+ 15 = 29	+ 3
		<b>Canto I + Blessings for Reuben/Judah, v. 1-7</b>	78	= 50	+ 28 = 62	+ 16
8		Levi: 52 (2 x 26) words				
		וְלֵבְנֵי אָמֵר	2	2		2
	10	תִּמְנֶה וְאוֹרֶה לְאִישׁ חֲסִידֶךָ	4	4	4	
		אֲשֶׁר נִסִּיתוֹ בַּמָּסָה	3	3	3	
		תִּרְיַבְהוּ עַל־מִי מְרִיבָה:	4	4	4	
		Total, v. 8	13	= 6	+ 7 = 11	+ 2
9		הָאָמֵר לְאָבִיו וּלְאִמּוֹ	3	3	3	
		לֹא רָאִיתִי	2	2	2	
	12	וְאֶת־אָחִיו לֹא הִכִּיר	4	4	4	
		וְאֶת־אָחִיו לֹא הִפִּיר	4	4	4	
	13	כִּי שָׁמְרוּ אִמְרֶתְךָ	3	3	3	
		וּבְרִיתְךָ יִנְצְרוּ:	2	2	2	
		Total, v. 9	18	= 13	+ 5 = 18	+ 0
10		יִזְרוּ מִשְׁפָּטֶיךָ לְיַעֲקֹב	3	3	3	
		וְתוֹרֶתְךָ לְיִשְׂרָאֵל	2	2	2	
	15	יִשְׂיִמוּ קְטוֹרֶה בְּאַפֶּךָ	3	3	3	
		וְכָלִיל עַל־מִזְבְּחֶךָ:	3	3	3	
		Total, v. 10	11	= 5	+ 6 = 11	+ 0
11		בְּרַךְ יְהוָה חֵילוֹ	3	3	3	
		וּפְעַל יָדָיו תִּרְצֶה	3	3	3	
	17	מִחֵץ מְתַנָּים קָמְיוֹ וּמִשְׁנֵאָיו	4	4	4	
		מִן־יְקוּמוֹן: ׀	2	2	2	
		Total, v. 11	12	= 6	+ 6 = 12	+ 0
		<b>Blessing for Levi, v. 8-11</b>	54	= 30	+ 24 = 52	+ 2
12		Benjamin: 12 words				
		לְבִנְיָמִן אָמֵר	2	2		2
	18	יָדִיד יְהוָה	2	2	2	
		יִשְׁכֵּן לְבֶטֶח עָלָיו	3	3	3	
	19	חִפָּה עָלָיו כָּל־הַיּוֹם	4	4	4	
		וּבֵין כְּתִיפָיו שָׁכֵן: ׀	3	3	3	
		Total, v. 12	14	= 7	+ 7 = 12	+ 2
		<b>Blessing for Benjamin, v. 11-12</b>	26	= 13	+ 13 = 24	+ 2
		<b>Blessings for Levi-Benjamin, v. 8-12</b>	68	= 37	+ 31 = 64	+ 4
		<b>Blessings for Judah-Benjamin, v. 6-12</b>	91	= 51	+ 40 = 84	+ 7
		<b>For Reuben-Benjamin + Canto I, v. 1-12</b>	156	= 87	+ 59 = 126	+ 20

13	Joseph: 52 (2 x 26) words	וְלוֹסֵרָה אָמַר	2	2		2
	Compare Levi	מְבֹרָכַת יְהוָה אֲרָצוֹהָ	20	3	3	3
	Seven bounties (1-7) of Joseph's land	וּמִמֶּנּוּ שְׁמֹנֶה מִטָּל <sup>1</sup>	3		3	3
		וּמִתְהוֹם רִבְצַת תְּחַת <sup>2</sup> :	3		3	3
14		וּמִמֶּנּוּ תְבוּאֹת שְׁמֶשׁ <sup>3</sup>	21	3	3	3
		וּמִמֶּנּוּ גֵרֶשׁ יִרְחִים <sup>4</sup> :	3		3	3
	Total, v. 13-14		17	= 8	+ 9	= 15 + 2
15		וּמִרֹאשׁ הַרְרֵי-קָדִים <sup>5</sup>	22	3	3	3
		וּמִמֶּנּוּ גִבְעוֹת עוֹלָם <sup>6</sup> :	3		3	3
16	Mid. vs.line (22+1+22)	וּמִמֶּנּוּ אֲרָץ וּמִלְאָה <sup>7</sup>	23	3	3	3
	Two middle words of vs. 2-29	וּרְצוֹן שְׁכֵנֵי סִנְהָה	24	3	3	3
	(324 = 161 + 2 + 161)	תְּבוּאֹתֶיהָ לְרֹאשׁ יוֹסֵרָה	24	3	3	3
		וּלְקַדְקַד גִּזֵּר אֶתְיוֹ:	3		3	3
	Total, v. 16		12	= 6	+ 6	= 12 + 0
	Total, v. 13-16		35	= 17	+ 18	= 33 + 2
17		בְּכוֹר שׁוּרוֹ הַדָּר לֹו	25	4	4	4
		וְקַרְנֵי רֹאשׁ קַרְנָיו	3		3	3
		בָּהֶם עַמִּים יִנְגַח	26	3	3	3
		יַחֲדוּ אַפְסֵי-אֲרָץ	3		3	3
		וְהֵם רִבְבוֹת אֶפְרַיִם	27	3		3
		וְהֵם אֶלְפֵי מְנַשֶּׁה: ס	3		3	3
	Total, v. 17		19	= 13	+ 6	= 19 + 0
	<b>Blessing for Joseph, Total, v. 13-17</b>		54	= 30	+ 24	= 52 + 2
	<b>Blessings for Benjamin-Joseph, v. 12-17</b>		68	= 37	+ 31	= 64 + 4
18	Zebulun-Issachar: 19 words	וְלוֹזְבוּלָן אָמַר	2	2		2
		שִׁמְחָה זְבוּלָן בְּצִאתָהָ	28	3	3	3
		וַיִּשְׁשַׁכֶּר בְּאַהֲלֵיהָ:	2		2	2
19		עַמִּים הַרְרֵי-קָדִים	29	3	3	3
		שֵׁם יוֹזְבָחַו וּזְבַחֵי-צִדְקָה	4		4	4
		כִּי שִׁפְעַת יָמִים יִינָקוּ	30	4	4	4
		וּשְׁפוּנֵי טְמוּנֵי חוֹל: ס	3		3	3
	<b>Blessing for Zebulun/Issachar, v. 18-19</b>		21	= 12	+ 9	= 19 + 2
20	Gad: 26 words	וְלוֹגָד אָמַר	2	2		2
		בְּרוּךְ מְרַחֵב גָּד	31	3	3	3
		כְּלָבִיא שִׁכֹּן	2		2	2
		וְטָרַף זְרוּעַ אֶף-קַדְקָד:	4		4	4
	Total, v. 20		11	= 5	+ 6	= 9 + 2
21		וַיִּגְרָא רֹאשִׁית לֹו	32	3	3	3
		כִּי-שֵׁם חֶלְקֶת מִחֶקֶק סִבּוּיָהּ	5		5	5
		וַיִּתֵּא רֹאשֵׁי עָם	33	3	3	3

		צְדָקַת יְהוָה עֲשֵׂה	3	3	3	
		וּמִשְׁפָּטָיו עִם־יִשְׂרָאֵל: ם	3	3	3	
		Total, v. 21	<u>17</u>	= 8 + 9	= 17 + 0	
		<b>Blessing for Gad, v. 20-21</b>	<u>28</u>	= 13 + 15	= 26 + 2	
		<b>Blessings for Judah-Gad, v. 7-21</b>	<u>187</u>	= 102 + 85	= 174 + 13	
22	Dan: 6 words	וַיִּבְרַךְ אָמַר	2	2		2
		דָּן גִּיּוֹר אֲרִיָּה	34	3	3	3
		יִזְנֶק מִן־הַבָּשָׂן:	3	3	3	
		<b>Blessing for Dan, v. 22</b>	<u>8</u>	= 5 + 3	= 6 + 2	
23	Naphtali: 9 words	וַיִּבְרַךְ אָמַר	2	2		2
		נַפְתָּלִי שְׂבַע רְצוֹן	35	3	3	3
		וּמִלֵּא בְרַכַּת יְהוָה	3	3	3	
		יָם וְדָרוֹם יִרְשָׁה: ם	3	3	3	
		<b>Blessing for Naphtali, v. 23</b>	<u>11</u>	= 8 + 3	= 9 + 2	
		<b>Blessings for Zebulun-Naphtali, v. 18-23</b>	<u>68</u>	= 38 + 30	= 60 + 8	
24	Asher: 14 words	וַיִּבְרַךְ אָמַר	2	2		2
		בְּרוּךְ מִבְּנֵי אֲשֶׁר	36	3	3	3
		יְהִי רְצוֹן אֲחִיו	3	3	3	
		וַטְבֵּל בַּשֶּׁמֶן רַגְלָו:	3	3	3	
25		בְּרִזָּל וּנְחֹשֶׁת מִנְעֻלֶיהָ	37	3	3	3
		וּכְיֹמֶיךָ דְבֹאֲךָ:	2	2	2	
		<b>Blessing for Asher, v. 24-25</b>	<u>16</u>	= 8 + 8	= 14 + 2	
		<b>The Blessings, Total, v. 6-25</b>	<u>229</u>	= 127 + 102	= 210 + 19	
		<b>Canto I and the Blessings, Total, v. 2-25</b>	<u>272</u>	= 153 + 119	= 252 + 20	
26	ישׁרוֹן Cf. v. 5a, 28, 29	אֵין כָּאֵל יִשְׁרוֹן	38	3	3	3
		רֹכֵב שָׁמַיִם בְּעֶזְרָךְ	3	3	3	
		וּבְנֵאוֹתָו שְׁחָקִים:	2	2	2	
27		מִעֲנֵה אֱלֹהֵי קֶדֶם	39	3	3	3
		וּמִתַּחַת זִרְעֵת עוֹלָם	3	3	3	
		וַיַּגְרֵשׁ מִפְּנֵיךָ אוֹיֵב	40	3	3	3
		וַיֹּאמֶר הַשֶּׁמֶר:	2	2	2	
		Total, v. 26-27	<u>19</u>	= 9 + 10	= 19 + 0	
		Total, v. 24-27	<u>35</u>	= 17 + 18	= 33 + 2	
28	Middle words of Canto II	וַיִּשְׁכֵּן יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּטַח	41	3	3	3
		בְּדַרְעֵינוּ* יַעֲקֹב	3	3	3	
		אֶל־אֲרָץ דְּגַן וְתִירוֹשׁ	42	4	4	4
		אֶף־שָׁמִיּוֹ יַעֲרֹפוּ טָל:	4	4	4	
		Words spoken about Israel Total, v. 28	<u>14</u>	= 10 + 4	= 14 + 0	
		Canticle II.1 v. 26-28	<u>33</u>	= 19 + 14	= 33 + 0	

29	אֲשֶׁר־יִשְׂרָאֵל	43	2	2	2
	מִן־כְּמוֹד		2	2	2
	עַם־נוֹשַׁע בְּיַתְדָה	44	3	3	3
	מִנְּנֵן עֲזָרָה		2	2	2
	וְאֲשֶׁר־חָרַב וְאַתְדָה <sup>^</sup>	45	3	3	3
	וַיִּכְחָשׁוּ אִיבֵיהֶם לָךְ		3	3	3
	וְאַתָּה עַל־בְּמוֹתֵימוֹ תִּדְרֹךְ : ס		4	4	4
	<b>Canticle II.2 Total, v. 29</b>		<b>19</b>	<b>= 12 + 7</b>	<b>= 19 + 0</b>
	Total, v. 28-29		<b>33</b>	<b>= 22 + 11</b>	<b>= 33 + 0</b>
	<b>Canto II Total, v. 26-29</b>		<b>52</b>	<b>= 31 + 21</b>	<b>= 52 + 0</b>
	<b>Blessing for Asher and Canto II, v. 24-29</b>		<b>68</b>	<b>= 39 + 29</b>	<b>= 66 + 2</b>
	<b>For Zebulun-Asher and Canto II, v. 18-29</b>		<b>136</b>	<b>= 77 + 59</b>	<b>= 126 + 10</b>
	The entire poetical body, Total, v. 2-29		<b>324</b>	<b>= 184 + 140</b>	<b>= 304 + 20</b>
	Including the heading, Total, v. 1-29		<b>336</b>	<b>= 194 + 142</b>	<b>= 304 + 32</b>

\* In 2d, MT has מִרְבַּת קָדֶשׁ, 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 Ribebboth Kadesh, with D.L. Christensen (2002), or, reading with Van der Woude (1994) and others מִמְּרִבַת קָדֶשׁ, ‘from Meribath Kadesh’. Whatever the case may be, the suggested emendation does not affect the number of words. In v. 2e, אֲשֶׁר־יִשְׂרָאֵל 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 אֲשֶׁר־יִשְׂרָאֵל.

\* In v. 28b the word עֵינִי is problematic, since one expects a verb parallel to וַיִּשְׁכֵּן in 28a. With Christensen and others, I read עָנִי, from the verb עָנָן, ‘to dwell’ (see HALOT, Volume 2, 800a). Compare מְעוֹנִין, ‘dwelling’.

## Observations

1. In terms of the 324 words of the poem as a whole, its arithmetic centre is constituted by the two words שְׁכֵנִי סִנְהָה, ‘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 סִנְהָה, ‘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:

וּמִמְּנֵד אֶרֶץ וּמְלֵאָה Yes, with the bounty of the earth and its fullness  
וּרְצוֹן שְׁכֵנִי סִנְהָה 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:

אֵף חֲבֵב עַמִּים כָּל־קִדְשׁוֹ בְיָדָךְ  
וְהֵם תִּכְנֹן לְרַגְלֶךָ יֹשֵׁב מִדְּבַר־תִּיבָה:

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 ( $18 = 7 + 4 + 7$ ):

וַיֵּשֶׁבן יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּטַח בְּדָר עַן יַעֲקֹב  
אֶל־אֲרָץ דָּגָן וְתִירוֹשׁ אֵף־שָׁמַיִם יַעֲרֹפוּ 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	$\left\{ \begin{array}{l} 43 (26 + 17) \\ 7 \\ 16 \\ 54 \\ 14 \\ 54 \\ 21 \\ 28 \\ 8 \\ 11 \\ 16 \\ 52 \end{array} \right. \begin{array}{l} \\ \\ \\ 68 (4 \times 17) \\ 68 (4 \times 17) \\ \\ 68 (4 \times 17) \\ \\ 68 (4 \times 17) \end{array}$
vs. 6 Reuben	7	
vs. 7 Judah	13	
vs. 8-11 Levi	52 (2 x 26)	
vs. 12 Benjamin	12	
vs. 13-17 Joseph	52 (2 x 26)	
vs. 18-19 Zebulun/Issachar	19 (16x17)	
vs. 20-21 Gad	26	
vs. 22 Dan	6	
vs. 23 Naphtali	9	
vs. 24-25 Asher	14	
vs. 26-29 Canto II	52 (2 x 26)	

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>	$20 + 1 + 6 + 2 + 14 =$	<b>43</b>
<u>for Judah</u>	$12 + 10 + 5 + 6 + 4 + 5 =$	<b>42</b>
<u>and for Levi</u>	$6 + 12 + 12 + 6 + 10 =$	<b>46</b>
<u>for Benjamin</u>	$12 + 2 + 14 + 10 + 13 + 14 =$	<b>65</b>
<u>and for Joseph</u>	$6 + 12 + 10 + 6 + 15 + 17 =$	<b>66</b>
<u>and for Zebulun</u>	$6 + 12 + 7 + 2 + 12 + 14 =$	<b>59</b>
<u>and Issachar</u>	$6 + 10 + 21 + 21 + 11 + 20 =$	<b>89</b>
<u>and for Gad</u>	$6 + 12 + 3 + 4 =$	<b>25</b>
<u>and for Dan</u>	$6 + 12 + 4 + 14 =$	<b>36</b>
<u>and for Naphtali</u>	$6 + 12 + 14 + 17 + 22 + 12 + 10 =$	<b>93</b>
<u>and for Asher</u>	$6 + 12 + 1 + 21 + 20 =$	<b>60</b>

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

- 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 **52**-word blessing for Joseph (vs. 13-17) is encompassed by **156** (6 x **26**) words in vs. 1-12, and **136** (8 x **17**) 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 in terms of the central position of the Joseph Blessing:

vs. 1-5	Introductory words and Canto I	} <b>156</b> (6 x <b>26</b> )
vs. 6-7	Blessings for Reuben and Judah	
vs. 8-12	Blessings for Levi and Benjamin	
<b>vs. 13-17</b>	<b>Blessing for Joseph, 52 words (2 x 26)</b>	
vs. 18-21	Blessings for Zebulun/Issachar and Gad	} <b>136</b> (8 x <b>17</b> )
vs. 22-25	Blessings for Dan, Naphtali, and Asher	
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	<b>39</b> words, with <b>26</b> in Canticle I.1 and <b>13</b> in the introduction
vs. 2-4	<b>34</b> (2 x <b>17</b> ) words in total
vs. 2-5	<b>43</b> words, with <b>26</b> before, and <b>17</b> after <i>atnach</i>
vs. 3-6	<b>34</b> words, with <b>17</b> before, and <b>17</b> after <i>atnach</i>
vs. 5-7	<b>17</b> words before <i>atnach</i>
vs. 1-7	<b>78</b> (3 x <b>26</b> ) words in total
vs. 8-11	<b>52</b> (2 x <b>26</b> ) words in the blessing for Levi
vs. 11-12	<b>26</b> words, with <b>13</b> before, and <b>13</b> after <i>atnach</i>
vs. 8-12	<b>68</b> (4 x <b>17</b> ) words in the blessings for Levi and Benjamin
vs. 6-12	<b>51</b> (3 x <b>17</b> ) words before <i>atnach</i>
vs. 1-12	<b>156</b> (6 x <b>26</b> ) words before the blessing for Joseph
vs. 13-14	<b>17</b> words in total

vs. 13-16	<b>17</b> words before <i>atnach</i>
vs. 13-17	<b>52</b> (2 x <b>26</b> ) words in the blessing for Joseph
vs. 12-17	<b>68</b> (4 x <b>17</b> ) words in the blessings for Benjamin and Joseph
vs. 21	<b>17</b> words in total
vs. 20-21	<b>26</b> words in the blessing for Gad
vs. 7-21	<b>187</b> ( <b>11x17</b> ) words: <b>102</b> (6x <b>17</b> ) before, <b>85</b> (5x <b>17</b> ) after <i>atnach</i>
vs. 18-23	<b>68</b> (4 x <b>17</b> ) words in total (Zebulun-Naphtali)
vs. 6-25	<b>102</b> (6 x <b>17</b> ) words after <i>atnach</i> in all blessings together
vs. 2-25	<b>272</b> (16x <b>17</b> ): <b>153</b> (9x <b>17</b> ) before, and <b>119</b> (7x <b>17</b> ) after <i>atnach</i>
vs. 24-27	<b>17</b> words before <i>atnach</i>
vs. 26-29	<b>52</b> (2 x <b>26</b> ) words in total in Canto II
vs. 18-29	<b>136</b> (8 x <b>17</b> ) 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	<b>11</b> words in the meaningful centre of Canto I
vs. 2-4	<b>33</b> words in Canticle I.1, excluding the introductory formula
vs. 1-5	<b>55</b> words altogether in the heading and Canto I
vs. 13-16	<b>33</b> words in the blessing (Column c)
vs. 20	<b>11</b> words used in the first part of the blessing for Gad
vs. 23	<b>11</b> words used in the blessing for Naphtali
vs. 24-27	<b>33</b> words in total (Column c)
vs. 26-28	<b>33</b> words in Canticle II.1
vs. 28-29	<b>33</b> 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 אלה, 'God', and in v. 27 אלהים, which occurs also in the heading (v. 1).

## Bibliography

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C.J. Labuschagne, Logotechnical Analysis of the Framework to [Deuteronomy 32](#).

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