

The Numerical Features of the Book of Deuteronomy

Please read the [General Introduction](#)

Part V 27,1-28,69 Moses Expounds the Moab Covenant (Revised)

In the symmetrical menorah pattern of the book, Moses' exposition of the Moab covenant in Part V (27-28) constitutes the counterpart of Part III (5-11), his exposition of the Horeb Covenant. There can be no doubt about its delimitation, because its outer boundary is after 28,69, the epilogue concluding Moses' speech in 27,12-28,68. The literary unity of Part V is attested by the well-known delimiting technique: it opens and concludes with a number of words that is a multiple of 17 or 26. 27,1-10 has 153 (9x17) words and 28,66-69 is made up of 68 (4x17) words .

The fact that *until this epilogue* (28,69), the book as a whole contains a number of words that is a multiple of 17, namely 11849 (697x17 or 41x17x17) shows that 28,69 is an important seam in terms of the book as a whole. It would of course be easy to wave this away as a matter of coincidence, were it not that the epilogue concludes Moses' speech, 27,1-28,68, which is significantly made up of 1300 (50x26) words and thus finalizes it as a distinct literary entity. This implies that 28,69 is structurally part of Part V (27-28,), but serves also as a bridge between Part V and Part VI.

Part V divides into two distinct parts: **Section 1, Chapter 27** with 26 verses and 1196 (46x26) letters, which opens with 153 (9x17) words and concludes with 102 (6x17) words, and **Section 2, Chapter 28** with 68 (4x17) verses (and an epilogue), which opens with 52 (2x26) + 68 (4x17) words and concludes with 68 (4x17) words. By having 1300 words 27,1-28,68 as a whole is governed by the number 26, but there is more. In **Section 1** 23 of the 26 verses (88%) and 298 of the 326 words (91%) are highlighted by 17 and 26 or their multiples, and in **Section 2** it is 51 of the 69 verses (74%) and 747 of the 994 words (75%) that are highlighted in this way.

Section 1 Deut 27,1-26 The Installation of the Law in the Land and the Litany of Curses

Vs	Text	Words	Letters	יהוה	Sum-Words	Paragraphs and Contents
1	Dt 27,1	16+	57		16	§1 27,1-8 123 words. Keep all the laws! The first thing the Israelites must do in Canaan is to inscribe the words of the law on plastered stones and to set them up on Mount Ebal. Then they must build there an altar of unhewn stones to offer whole-offerings upon it for God and to eat there the sacrifices and rejoice. They must engrave the law on these stones.
2	Dt 27,2	20+	74	1	36	
3	Dt 27,3	28+	100	3	64	
4	Dt 27,4	18+	72		82	
5	Dt 27,5	11+	45	4	93	
6	Dt 27,6	12+	53	6	105	
7	Dt 27,7	8+	35	7	113	
8	Dt 27,8	10+	37		123 S	
9	Dt 27,9	17+	71	8	140	§2 27,9-10 30 words. They have become YHWH's people and must observe his commandments.
10	Dt 27,10	13=153(9x17)	52	9	153 (9x17) S	
11	Dt 27,11	7	24		160	§3 27,11-14 45 words. Six tribes must stand on Gerizim for the blessing.
12	Dt 27,12	17	71		177	
13	Dt 27,13	12	48		189	
14	Dt 27,14	9	31		198 S	
15	Dt 27,15	18+	66	10	216 S ¹ T	§4 27,15-26 128 (26+102) words. The entire paragraph is highlighted by the divine name numbers: 26 words in Curses 1-2 and 102 (6x17) words in Curses 3-12. The curse dealing with bestiality (v 21) receives extra emphasis, being the 7th and because until this point the text has 272 (16x17) words. For more particulars, see the Hebrew text below and especially Observation 2. 27,1-25 312 (12x26) words. 27,1-26 326 words, 1196 (46x26) letters.
16	Dt 27,16	8=26	28		224 S ² w	
17	Dt 27,17	8+	28		232 S ³ e	
18	Dt 27,18	8+	27		240 S ⁴ l	
19	Dt 27,19	10=26+	35		250 S ⁵ v	
20	Dt 27,20	13+	40		263 S ⁶ e	
21	Dt 27,21	9+	27		272 S ⁷ C	
22	Dt 27,22	13+	38		285 S ⁸ u	
23	Dt 27,23	8+	26		293 S ⁹ r	
24	Dt 27,24	8+	27		301 S ¹⁰ s	
25	Dt 27,25	11+	35		312 S ¹¹ e	
26	Dt 27,26	14=102(6x17)	49		326 P ¹² s	
26	27,1-2 6	326	1196	10x		

Observation 1 The Masoretic layout markers divide the text of Section 1 into four paragraphs:

§1 1-8 Moses, with the elders of Israel, tells the people what to do the first day in Canaan S

§2 9-10 Moses, with the Levitical priests, urges them to observe God's commandments S

§3 11-14 Moses gives them instructions concerning the blessing- and curse-ritual S

§4 15-26 These are the exact words of the Litany of Curses prescribed by Moses P

Observation 2 The function of the 11 Setumoth (marked S¹⁻¹¹) is to mark the curses which deal with specific trespasses, different from the 12th curse (v 26) which deals with the fulfilling of the laws in general. Most strikingly, until the 11th Setumah the text (vs 1-25) has exactly **312** (12x26) words. As a result, the 12th curse receives extra emphasis, apart from the fact that it is the **26th** verse.

<p>27.1 וַיִּצַו מֹשֶׁה וְזִקְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶת־הָעָם לֵאמֹר שָׁמַר אֶת־כָּל־הַמִּצְוֹת אֲשֶׁר אָנֹכִי מְצַוֶּה אֹתְכֶם הַיּוֹם: 2 וְהָיָה בַיּוֹם אֲשֶׁר תַּעֲבְרוּ אֶת־הַיַּרְדֵּן אֶל־הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר־יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיךָ נָתַן לָךְ וְהִקְמַתָּ לָךְ אֲבָנִים גְּדֹלוֹת וְשָׂדֵת אֹתָם בְּשִׂיר: 3 וְכָתַבְתָּ עֲלֵיהֶן אֶת־כָּל־דְּבָרֵי הַתּוֹרָה הַזֹּאת בְּעֵבֶר־ךָ לְמַעַן אֲשֶׁר תָּבֹא אֶל־הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר־יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיךָ נָתַן לָךְ אֶרֶץ זָבַת חֶלֶב וְדֶבֶשׁ כַּאֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי־אַבְרָהָם לָךְ: 4 וְהָיָה בְּעִבְרָתְכֶם אֶת־הַיַּרְדֵּן תִּקְיִמוּ אֶת־הָאֲבָנִים הָאֵלֶּה אֲשֶׁר אָנֹכִי מְצַוֶּה אֹתְכֶם הַיּוֹם בְּתֵר עֵיבָל וְשָׂדֵת אוֹתָם בְּשִׂיר: 5 וּבְנֵית שֵׁם מִזְבֵּחַ לַיהוָה אֱלֹהֵיךָ מִזְבֵּחַ אֲבָנִים לֹא־תִגַּף עֲלֵיהֶם בְּרוּל: 6 אֲבָנִים שְׁלֵמוֹת תִּבְנֶה אֶת־מִזְבֵּחַ יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיךָ וְהִעַלִּית עָלָיו עֹלֹת לַיהוָה אֱלֹהֵיךָ: 7 וְזָבַחְתָּ שְׁלָמִים וְאַקְלַתָּ שֵׁם וְשִׁמַּחְתָּ לִפְנֵי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיךָ: 8 וְכָתַבְתָּ עַל־הָאֲבָנִים אֶת־כָּל־דְּבָרֵי הַתּוֹרָה הַזֹּאת בְּאֵר הַיֵּטֵב: 9 וַיְדַבֵּר מֹשֶׁה וְהַכֹּהֲנִים הַלְוִיִּם אֶל כָּל־יִשְׂרָאֵל לֵאמֹר הִסְכַּתּוּ וּשְׁמַע יִשְׂרָאֵל הַיּוֹם הַזֶּה נְהִינִית לְעַם לַיהוָה אֱלֹהֵיךָ: 10 וּשְׁמַעְתָּ בְּקוֹל יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיךָ וַעֲשִׂית אֶת־מִצְוֹתָיו וְאֶת־חֻקָּיו אֲשֶׁר אָנֹכִי מְצַוֶּה הַיּוֹם: 11 וַיִּצַו מֹשֶׁה אֶת־הָעָם בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא לֵאמֹר: 12 אֵלֶּה יַעֲמְדוּ לְבַרְךְ אֶת־הָעָם עַל־תֵּר גְּרוּזִים בְּעִבְרָתְכֶם אֶת־הַיַּרְדֵּן שְׁמַעוֹן וְלֵוִי וַיהוּדָה וַיִּשְׁשָׁכַר וַיֹּסֵף וּבְנֵימִן: 13 וְאֵלֶּה יַעֲמְדוּ עַל־הַקְּלָלָה בְּתֵר עֵיבָל רְאוּבֵן גָּד וְאָשֶׁר וְזַבּוּלֹן דָּן וּנְפֹתָלַי: 14 וְעַנּוּ הַלְוִיִּם וְאָמְרוּ אֶל־כָּל־אִישׁ יִשְׂרָאֵל קוֹל רֹם: 15 אֲרוּר הָאִישׁ אֲשֶׁר יַעֲשֶׂה פֶסֶל וּמַסֵּכָה תוֹעֵבַת יְהוָה מַעֲשֵׂה יָדָי חָרָשׁ וְשֵׁם בְּסִתֵּר וְעַנּוּ כָל־הָעָם וְאָמְרוּ אָמֵן: 16 אֲרוּר מַקְלָה אֲבִיו וְאָמוֹ וְאָמַר כָּל־הָעָם אָמֵן: 17 אֲרוּר מַסִּיג גְּבוּל רְעֵהוּ וְאָמַר כָּל־הָעָם אָמֵן: 18 אֲרוּר מַשְׁגֵּה עוֹר בְּדַרְךָ וְאָמַר כָּל־הָעָם אָמֵן: 19 אֲרוּר מַטֵּה מִשְׁפַּט גְּרִיָּתוֹם וְאַלְמָנָה וְאָמַר כָּל־הָעָם אָמֵן: 20 אֲרוּר שֹׁכֵב עִם־אִשְׁתׁ אֲבִיו כִּי גִלָּה כְּנַף אֲבִיו וְאָמַר כָּל־הָעָם אָמֵן: 21 אֲרוּר שֹׁכֵב עִם־כָּל־בְּהֵמָה וְאָמַר כָּל־הָעָם אָמֵן: 22 אֲרוּר שֹׁכֵב עִם־אֶחָתוֹ בֵּת־אֲבִיו אוֹ בֵּת־אָמוֹ וְאָמַר כָּל־הָעָם אָמֵן: 23 אֲרוּר שֹׁכֵב עִם־חֲתָנָתוֹ וְאָמַר כָּל־הָעָם אָמֵן: 24 אֲרוּר מַכֵּה רְעֵהוּ בְּסִתֵּר וְאָמַר כָּל־הָעָם אָמֵן: 25 אֲרוּר לִקְנַח שֹׁחַד לְהַכּוֹת נַפְשׁ דָּם נָגַף וְאָמַר כָּל־הָעָם אָמֵן: 26 אֲרוּר אֲשֶׁר לֹא־יִקְיָם אֶת־דְּבָרֵי הַתּוֹרָה־הַזֹּאת לַעֲשׂוֹת אוֹתָם וְאָמַר כָּל־הָעָם אָמֵן: 26 words 26 words</p>	<p>§1 27,1-8 Moses and the elders speak: 7 + "116" = 123 The 7-word editorial note is made up of 26 letters.</p> <p>§2 27,9-10 Moses and the Levites speak: 8 + "22" = 30</p> <p>§3 27,11-14 Moses speaks: 7 + "38" = 45</p> <p>§4 Vs 15-26 The curses Moses commands the Levites to intone with a loud voice and the 'Amen' of the people: "79" + 49 = 128 words. Vs 15-16 and 17-19 have each 26 words. All words spoken by Moses: 116+22+38+128 = 304 words. Editorial notes: 7+8+7 = 22 words. The 12 curses correspond to the 12 tribes of Israel. Sealed by 26 verses.</p>
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Section 2 Deut 28,1-69 Blessings for Obedience but Curses and Disasters for Disobedience

I have refrained from displaying the Hebrew text, because its numerical features can sufficiently be expounded in the chart.

Vs	Text	Words	Letters	ידוה	Sum-Words	Paragraphs and Contents
27	Dt 28,1	24+	92	12	350	<p>§5 28,1-10 Obedience makes Israel great Vs. 1 and 10b form an inclusion.</p> <p>The entire text is highlighted by 17 and 26. Vs. 1-4 have 52 (2x26) words and Vs. 5-10 are made up of 68 (4x17) words. Vs. 3-6 ברוך, 'blessed', occurs 6x – cf. vs. 16-19.</p> <p>120 (52+68) words.</p>
28	Dt 28,2	11+	45	13	361	
29	Dt 28,3	6+	23		367	
30	Dt 28,4	11=52(2x26)	48		378	
31	Dt 28,5	3+	15		381	
32	Dt 28,6	6+	24		387	
33	Dt 28,7	16+	69	14	403	
34	Dt 28,8	16+	60	16	419	
35	Dt 28,9	16+	60	18	435	
36	Dt 28,10	11=68(4x17)	37	19	446/120	
37	Dt 28,11	17	72	21	463	<p>§6 28,11-14 Obedience makes Israel prosperous</p> <p>The S indicates the end of the blessings-section.</p>
38	Dt 28,12	23	82	22	486	
39	Dt 28,13	23	89	24	509	
40	Dt 28,14	16	68		525/79 S	
41	Dt 28,15	23+	92	25	548	<p>§7 28,15-19 Disobedience brings about disasters 47 words = ארוך 'cursed' (1+20+6+20) which occurs 6x. See §17 28,58-68 which has 188 (4x47) words. 10 different curses are mentioned in 7 groups. Until this point 572 (22x26) words in 27,1-28,19.</p>
42	Dt 28,16	6+	23		554	
43	Dt 28,17	3+	15		557	
44	Dt 28,18	9+	39		566	
45	Dt 28,19	6=47	24		572/47	
46	Dt 28,20	24+	89	26	596	<p>§8 28,20-22 Pestilence, famine, and diseases §§8-13 are especially highlighted by 17 and 26. 51 (3x17) words.</p>
47	Dt 28,21	15+	49	27	611	
48	Dt 28,22	12=51(3x17)	62	28	623/51	
49	Dt 28,23	10+	38		633	<p>§9 28,23-26 Disasters: famine and the sword</p> <p>51 (3x17) words.</p>
50	Dt 28,24	13+	44	29	646	
51	Dt 28,25	18+	77	30	664	
52	Dt 28,26	10=51(3x17)	45		674/51	
53	Dt 28,27	11+	49	31	685	<p>§10 28,27-31 Egyptian boils and other afflictions</p> <p>68 (4x17) words.</p>
54	Dt 28,28	6+	31	32	691	
55	Dt 28,29	19+	79		710	
56	Dt 28,30	14+	50		724	
57	Dt 28,31	18=68(4x17)	74		742/68	
58	Dt 28,32	14+	57		756	<p>§11 28,32-35 Oppression, exile, and slavery</p> <p>51 (3x17) words.</p>
59	Dt 28,33	15+	54		771	
60	Dt 28,34	6+	26		777	
61	Dt 28,35	16/51(3x17)	60	33	793/51	
62	Dt 28,36	21+	75	34	814	<p>§12 28,36-39 Exile and agricultural disasters</p> <p>51 (3x17) words.</p>
63	Dt 28,37	10+	43	35	824	
64	Dt 28,38	9+	35		833	
65	Dt 28,39	11=51 (3x17)	43		844/51	
66	Dt 28,40	11+	38		855	<p>§13 28,40-42 No olive oil and no daughters</p> <p>26 words.</p>
67	Dt 28,41	9+	33		864	
68	Dt 28,42	6=26	23		870/26	
69	Dt 28,43	11	40		881	<p>§14 28,43-45 Overpowered and surpassed by aliens</p> <p>§§8-14 The 7 disasters: 26 verses and 340 (20x17) words.</p>
70	Dt 28,44	11	41		892	
71	Dt 28,45	20	83	36	912/42	
72	Dt 28,46	7+	28		919	<p>§15 28,46-48 These curses will be a sign and portent</p> <p>39 words contain the YHWH 'echad formula: 26+13=39.</p>
73	Dt 28,47	12+	41	37	931	
74	Dt 28,48	20/39	77	38	951/39	

75	Dt 28,49	15+	55	39	966	§16 28,49-57 A military siege and its effects A foreign nation will swoop upon the Israelites. The climax of the curse: besieged in all their cities. They will be reduced to cannibalism. Those who eat their own children will be selfish. They will find themselves in dire straits. The most pampered, delicate women will be selfish.
76	Dt 28,50	11=26	34		977	
77	Dt 28,51	21+	82		998	
78	Dt 28,52	26=47= אָרֶיֶךְ	94	40	1024	
79	Dt 28,53	17	66	41	1041	
80	Dt 28,54	14+	55		1055	
81	Dt 28,55	19+	70		1074	
82	Dt 28,56	19=52(2x26)	71		1093	
83	Dt 28,57	19	80		1112/161	
84	Dt 28,58	21+	79	42	1133	
85	Dt 28,59	13=34(2x17)	58	43	1146	
86	Dt 28,60	11	40		1157	
87	Dt 28,61	16	54	44	1173	
88	Dt 28,62	15	60	45	1188	
89	Dt 28,63	25	106	47	1213	
90	Dt 28,64	20+	77	48	1233	
91	Dt 28,65	19+	71	49	1252	
92	Dt 28,66	11+	46		1263	
93	Dt 28,67	18=68(4x17)	66		1281	
94	Dt 28,68	19+	85	50	1300 S	Epilogue These words are about the Moab covenant
95	Dt 28,69	20=68(4x17)	71	51	1320/20 P	
68	28,1-68	974	3810	40x	974	28,58-69 208 (8x26) words. 11849 (697x17=41x17x17) words.
69	28,1-69	994	3881	41x	994	
94	27,1-28,68	1300 (50x26)	5006	50x	1300	
95	27,1-28,69	1320	5077	51(3x17)	1320	
788	1,1-28,69	11849	45450	470x	11849	

Observation 3 Apart from the Setumah at the end of Moses' speech (after 28,68) there is only another one after 28,14. Its function is to separate the Blessings for Obedience (28,1-14) from the Disasters for Disobedience (28,15-68). This means that we have to do without the guidance of layout markers in determining the architecture of the text and rely solely on the material content as most scholars do. However, I discovered that the numerical features of the text can be very helpful. In my view, the following division into 13 paragraphs is the most plausible proposal for its structure. Considering that the two sections of Part V constitute a single literary entity I have numbered the 4+13=17 paragraphs as an unbroken string (for §§1-4 in Section 1, see Observation 1):

§5	28,1-10	Obedience makes Israel great	120 (52+68) words	
§6	28,11-14	Obedience makes Israel prosperous	79 words	
§7	28,15-19	Disobedience brings about disasters	47 words = אָרֶיֶךְ, 'cursed'	
§8	28,20-22	Pestilence, famine, and diseases	51 (3x17) words	170 (10x17)
§9	28,23-26	Disasters: famine and the sword	51 (3x17) words	
§10	28,27-31	Egyptian boils and other afflictions	68 (4x17) words	170 (20x17)
§11	28,32-35	Oppression, exile, and slavery	51 (3x17) words	
§12	28,36-39	Exile and agricultural disasters	51 (3x17) words	
§13	28,40-42	Lack of olive oil and no daughters	26 words	408 (24x17)
§14	28,43-45	Overpowered and surpassed by aliens	42 words	
§15	28,46-48	These curses will be a sign and portent	39 words	208 (8x26)
§16	28,49-57	A military siege and its effects	161 words	
§17	28,58-68	Disobedience leads to utter destruction	188 (4x47)+	
Epilogue	28,69	These words are about the Moab covenant	20 words =	

Observation 4 Section 2 is delimited by 52 (2x26) + 68 (4x17) opening words (vs. 1-10) and 208 (8x26) concluding words (68-69), in line with the well-known delimiting device. §§8-10 (20-31) have 170 (10x17) words; §§11-14 (35-45) likewise 170 (10x17) words; §§15-17 and the Epilogue have altogether 408 (24x17) words.

Observation 5 In 28,2-6 the root בִּרְךְ, 'to bless', occurs **7x**, while **11 blessings** are mentioned in 3-6: ¹*in the city*, ²*in the field*, ³*the fruit of your body*, ⁴*the fruit of your ground*, ⁵*the fruit of your beasts*, ⁶*the increase of your cattle*, ⁷*the young of your flock*, ⁸*your basket*, ⁹*your kneading-trough*, ¹⁰*your coming in*, ¹¹*your going out*. I need not remind the reader that **11** is the number of fulfilment.

Observation 6 §7 (15-19), the very first paragraph in the curse-subsection, is made up of **47** words, which is not a matter of coincidence, because **47** represents the letter value of the key-word אָרוּר, 'cursed' (1+20+6+20 = **47**) which occurs no less than 6x in this paragraph. The number **47** reappears in the **188** words of §17 (58-68) because **188** = 4x**47**.

Observation 7 In §7 **10 curses** are mentioned - one less than the **11** blessings in 3-6 and obviously by analogy with the Ten Plagues of Egypt: ¹*upon you in the city*, ²*upon you in the field*, ³*upon your basket*, ⁴*upon your kneading-trough*, ⁵*upon the fruit of your body*, ⁶*upon the fruit of your land*, ⁷*upon the offspring of your herds*, ⁸*upon the offspring of your lambing flocks*, ⁹*upon your coming in*, ¹⁰*upon your going out*.

Note also that the **7** paragraphs dealing with the curses (§§8-14, 28,20-45) have altogether **26** verses and **340** (20x**17**) words!

Observation 8 The fact that until 28,69 the book has a number of words that is a multiple of the divine name number **17** strongly suggests that we have to do with a preliminary rounding off and finalizing of the book at this point: Deut. 1.1-28,69 with **11849** (**697x17=41x17x17**) words. This is undelined by the fact that 27,1-28,68 (without the Epilogue in 28,69) has **1300** (50x**26**) words.

As we shall see there is another preliminary rounding off and sealing to be found in Part VI (29,1-30,20), because in 1,1-30,20 we count **12614** (742x**17**) words. Compare Observation 4 in [Part VI](#). For a similar feature in Genesis, see Observation 12 in [Part IV](#) of my analysis of the book of Genesis.

Observation 9 The paramount importance of the curses in Deuteronomy is also expressed symbolically by the number of times the name YHWH occurs in 1,1-28,69, namely **470** (**10x47**) times. The string of **21** occurrences of the key-phrase יהוה אלהיך corroborates the unity of Part V. It occurs **8x** in Chapter 27 (2.3.5.6a.6b.7.9.10) and **13x** in Chapter 28 (1a.1b.2.8.9.13.15.45.47.52.53.58.62). For more particulars, see Observation 9 in [Part III](#).

Observation 10 For the Divine Speeches in 27-28, see the table at the end of [31-34](#), because they belong to the third group of **10** Speeches in 27-34. The first group of **10** is in [1-3](#), the second in [4-26](#).

[Continue to Part VI \(29-30\)](#)