

7. Numerical Features of Exodus 33

The common theme of the 'angel of YHWH', who will journey with the Israelites to the promised land, links Exodus 33 (cf. 1-3) to [Exodus 23](#) (20-33) and also to [Exodus 14](#) (19-20). Significantly enough, the number **47** appears no less than six times in 14, 20, 24, and 33:

14:2-4	YHWH reveals his plan to Moses	47 words
14:15-18	YHWH tells Moses what to do to execute his plan	47 words
20:24-26	YHWH ordains the building of an altar	47 words
24:12-14	YHWH summons Moses to receive the stone tablets	47 words
33:1-3	YHWH tells Moses to bring Israel to the promised land	47 words
33:12-13	Moses asks YHWH: Whom will you send with me?	47 words

All six passages have to do with Moses as YHWH's agent, whose mission is to execute YHWH's salvific acts. This mysterious number can be explained as representing the numerical value of the word מַלְאָכִי, 'my angel' (13+12+1+11+10), which occurs explicitly in Exod. 23:23 (cf. also 32:34).¹

33:1	YHWH orders Moses and the people to go to the promised land	23
	The <i>kabod</i> number preludes the theme of YHWH's Glory/Presence (vs. 18-23)	
	Also the fact that Exodus 33 is made up of 23 verses is probably intentional	
33:1-2	YHWH dispatches the people and promises to send an angel	34 (2 x 17)
33:3	YHWH hesitates to journey in the company of a stubborn people	17
33:1-3	The section containing YHWH's first speech (4 + "47")	51 (3 x 17)
	The words in the divine speech numerically signify 'my angel'	47
33:5	YHWH orders the Israelites to put away their ornaments	17
33:1-6	Words in the two divine speeches (47 in vs. 1-3 and 21 in v. 5)	68 (4 x 17)
33:7	The Tent of Meeting set up by Moses outside the camp	26 = 15 + 11
33:12-16	Moses requires assurance about YHWH's Presence on the journey	82
	The 82 words divide into 78 (3 x 26) used about Moses and 4 spoken by YHWH	
33:12-13	First part of Moses' speech: Whom will you send with me?	47
	The 47 words have 34 before <i>atnach</i> , and Moses' speech comprises 43	
33:17	YHWH complies with Moses' request, for he knows him by name	17
	YHWH's reference to Moses' name alludes to Exod. 23:21, where YHWH says "My Name abides in him". This means that Moses embodies the Name YHWH.	
	That is to say, the Name (יהוה) is given tangible form in Moses (מֹשֶׁה), as shown by gematria: The Name (5 + 21 + 13 = 39) equals Moses (13 + 21 + 5 = 39).	
33:17-20	YHWH spells out his Name and explains what it stands for	52 (3 x 26)
33:21-23	YHWH reveals his glorious Presence to Moses	28 (4 x 7)
	The 28 words divide neatly into 2 words in the introduction and 26 in the speech.	
	Of the 28 words 17 stand before <i>atnach</i> .	

Conclusion: The idea of YHWH's Presence (Face) through his Glory (*kabod*) and his Name (YHWH), which is embodied in Moses, is skilfully interwoven into the text by means of the two divine name numbers. At the same time, the numbers **17** and **26** represent the numerical value of the word *kabod* (vs. 18 and 22), which is intentionally written in *scriptio defectiva*. Positional value: *kbd* = 11 + 2 + 4 = **17**; decimal value: *kbd* = 20 + 2 + 4 = **26**.²

¹ The angel in Num. 20:16 has a different role: he brings the Israelites out of Egypt. The angel in Mal. 3:1 ('my angel') is to prepare the way for God. Note that God's speech in Mal. 3:19-21 (4:1-3) has **47** words! See also note 2 in my analysis of [Exodus 23](#) for the **47** letters in Exod. 23:21!

² In *scriptio plena* the word is written *kbwd* = 11 + 2 + 6 + 4 = **23** and 20 + 2 + 6 + 4 = **32**. Consult the [General Introduction](#), "The name YHWH woven into the fabric of the text", pp. 4-6.