8. Numerical Features of Exodus 14
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8. Numerical Features of Exodus 14

My logotechnical analyses of Exodus 23 and 33 necessitated an investigation into the numerical features of Exodus 14. The theme of the ‘angel of God’, who journeys with the Israelites from Egypt to Canaan, links these three texts not only in terms of content but also numerically, particularly by the conspicuous use of the number 47, the numerical value of יָּכְבוֹד, ‘my angel’ (13+12+1+11+10).

The word occurs explicitly in 23:23 and 32:34. In Exodus 14, the first and second speeches of YHWH (vs. 2-4 and 15-18) are both composed of 47 words. For the use of this number, which occurs no less than six times, see my analysis of Exodus 33.

In this impressive composition the divine name numbers 17 and 26 as well as the kabod numbers 23 and 32 give prominence to the crucial events. This also holds true for the conclusion of the Passover passage in chapter 12, Exod. 12:50-51 and 13:17-22, the prologue to Reed Sea passage:

12:50-51 After the Passover ritual, YHWH brought the people of Israel out of Egypt 51 (3x17)
13:17 God decides not to lead the people by way of the land of the Philistines 24
These 24 words divide into 17 in the narrative and 7 in God’s speech
The number 24 may have been chosen to symbolically signify the 12 tribes, all the more, so, because Exodus 19:1-2 (the arrival of the Israelites in the wilderness of Sinai) also opens with 24 words (12 in 19:1 and 12 in 19:2). Compare Exodus 1:1-7.
13:17-19 God makes them go round by way of the wilderness towards the Reed Sea 60
These 60 words divide into 28 before, and 32 after atnach
13:20-22 The cloud and the pillar of fire, representing YHWH’s glory, guide them 32
These words 32 words divide into 23 before, and 9 after atnach
13:18-22 Total number of words in the passage dealing with God’s guidance 68 (4x17)
13:17-22 Total number of words in the pericope: 92 with 51 (3 x 17) before atnach
14:1-4 YHWH informs Moses about his plan to win glory at the expense of Pharaoh 52 (2x26)
These 52 words divide into 5 in the introduction and in the divine speech 47
14:4 He intends to harden Pharaoh's heart and tells the people to camp by the sea 17
14:5-8 Pharaoh is alerted: he pursues the Israelites and overtakes them 55
The number 55 represents the double kabod pattern (55 = 23 + 32) signifying the glory of YHWH, which is explicitly referred to in v. 4 and 17! Also consult Exodus 33.
14:6-8 Pharaoh and his army set out to pursue the Israelites 34 (2x17)
14:2-8 Total number of words in the passage dealing with Pharaoh’s pursuit 102 (6x17)
14:10-11 Realizing their predicament, the Israelites call to God and blame Moses 34 (2x17)
14:9-12 Total number of words in the passage dealing with the people’s reaction 75
These 75 words divide into 21 words in the introduction and 34 (2x17) in the speech
14:13-14 Moses tells the people not to fear, for YHWH will fight for them 32
Here the kabod number symbolically refers to YHWH’s presence in the situation
14:15-18 YHWH instructs Moses what to do in order to execute his plan (cf. 1-4) 51 (3x17)
These 51 words divide neatly into 4 in the introduction and 47 in the divine speech
Note how this passage resembles vs. 1-4, where YHWH reveals his plan!
14:15-20 The 86 words in the passage divide into 52 (2x26) before, and 34 (2x17) after atnach
14:21-22 Moses holds out his hand over the sea and YHWH performs a miracle 32
As in vs. 13-14, the kabod number symbolically refers to YHWH’s presence
14:23-25 YHWH throws the Egyptians into a panic and they decide to flee 43 (17+26)

1 For the kabod numbers, see my analysis of Exodus 33, note 1.
The 26 words before and 17 after *atnach* determine the division of the 43 words.

14:26  YHWH orders Moses to hold his hand out over the sea to let the army drown 17

The 17 words divide into 4 in the introduction and 13 in YHWH’s speech.

It may not just be coincidence that this is the 26th verse. It supports the function of 17
to symbolically express YHWH’s presence!

14:26-28  At YHWH’s command the water covers the Egyptians and no one survives 55

The 55 words divide into 42 in the narrative and 13 in YHWH’s final speech.

14:31  YHWH’s plan executed: the Israelites put their faith in him and in Moses 17

14:15-31  Total number of words used to describe the execution of YHWH’s plan 260!

14:1-31  The name YHWH occurs 17 times.