

9. Numerical Features of Exodus 19 and 24

The striking numerical features of the Exodus 14, 20, 23, and 33 prompted me to ascertain the numerical aspects of the two other key-passages in the story of the Sinai events: the confrontation between YHWH and the people of Israel in Exodus 19, and the making of the covenant in Exodus 24. The compositional aspects of the legal material in Exodus 21-22 will be presented in a [separate file](#).

Exodus 19

19:1-2	The Israelites set out to encamp in the wilderness of Sinai As in 13:17 the number 24 symbolically signify the 12 tribes Note that in 24:1-7 both YHWH and the people speak 12 words	24
19:3	Moses goes up to God, who summons him to speak to the people	17
19:4	YHWH reminds the people of what he has done for them Vs. 3-4 contains the minor YHWH 'echad formula (see the General Introduction), which expresses the unique salvific act of the One and only God	13
19:5	YHWH's pledge to Israel to consider them his special possession	17
19:1-6	Total number of words in the introductory passage The 85 words divide into 34 (2x 17) narrative and 51 (3x 17) speech	85 (5 x 17)
19:7-8	Moses conveys YHWH's message to the elders of the people The 31 words divide into 26 narrative and 5 in the people's answer	31
19:8	The people pledge to do what YHWH says (12 in the narrative!)	17
19:9	YHWH tells Moses to hallow the people to be confronted with God	26
19:3-15	YHWH summons Moses to communicate his words to the people	204 (12x 17)
19:16-23	Thunder, lightning, and trumpet-blasts accompany their discourse The passage has 85 words in the narrative and 37 in the speeches	85 (5 x 17)
19:19-22	YHWH speaks to Moses amidst trumpet-blasts and thunder	52 (2 x 26)
19:3-24	This passage has 153 (9 x 17) words in the narrative and 192 in the speeches	
19:3-24	The 192 words in the speeches divide into 5 words spoken by the people and 187 (11 x 17) by YHWH and Moses together (163 and 24 respectively).	
19:3-25	In MT, the name YHWH occurs 18 times. If we follow the LXX, which reads 'God' instead of YHWH in v. 24b, the divine name appears 17 times, as in Exodus 14.	

Exodus 24

24:1	YHWH summons Moses, Aaron, Nadab, Abihu, and the 70 elders The 15 words divide into 3 in the introductory formula and 12 in God's speech, which reminds us of the 24 (2 x 12) words in 13:17 and 19:1-2	15
24:3	Moses conveys YHWH's words: the people agree to obey him Of the 23 words (representing YHWH's glory) 17 stand in the narrative and 6 in the people's speech	23
24:4	Moses builds an altar and erected 12 pillars according to the 12 tribes The 19 words are intentionally divided into 12 before, and 7 after <i>atnach</i>	19
24:5-8	Moses performs the blood ritual of the covenant and reads the law Of the 55 words (representing the double kebod-YHWH number: 55 = 23 + 32) 17 stand in the speeches (6 by the people and 11 by Moses) and 26 are	55

positioned before *atnach* (**55 = 26 + 29**)

- 24:1-8 YHWH speaks **12** words and the people speak **12** words; Moses **11** words
- 24:9-11 Moses and his group experience the presence of God and his glory **32**
- 24:1-11 Total number of words in the passage about the covenant making **156** (6 x **26**)
- 24:12-14 YHWH summons Moses to the top to receive the stone tablets **47**
We have encountered this significant number in Exodus 14, 20, and 33.
It represents the numerical value of the word מַלְאָכִי, 'my angel'
(13+12+1+11+10), which is closely associated with Moses as YHWH's messenger.
See my analysis of [Exodus 33](#).
- 24:16 YHWH's *glory* and the *cloud* rest on Mount Sinai for 6 days
and on the 7th day he calls to Moses out of the *cloud* **17**
- 24:15-18 Moses goes up the mountain to stay there for 40 days and 40 nights **49** (7 x 7)
The concluding sentence "And Moses stayed on the mountain forty days and forty
nights" is intentionally composed of **7** words to match the **49** (7 x 7) words, which
symbolically expresses the idea of fullness squared.
- 24:1-18 The name YHWH occurs **11** times and that of Moses **13** times.
YHWH and Moses both speak 27 words, the significance of which still eludes us.
The people speak in total **12** (6 + 6) words: one for every clan.

This chapter in particular demonstrates the numerical thinking of the scribes: for them, writing entailed composing and composing involved counting.