

# 3 Clusters and Series of Seven Divine Speeches

## The Divine Speech Formulas As an Incentive to Counting

**W**y interest in the use of the number seven in the Old Testament gained considerable momentum when I did some research in the mid-seventies for a series of radio broadcast lectures on the idea of God speaking in the Old Testament.<sup>1</sup> When I scrutinized the relevant texts in the Pentateuch, I encountered a striking phenomenon: the remarkable way the biblical writers utilized the phrases introducing the so-called divine speeches, the words reported as spoken by God in the first person. Formulas or fixed forms of phrases, such as “God said,” “God spoke,” “the Lord said,” “the Lord said to X,” are used to introduce God as a character in the narrative who deliberates, communicates and speaks. Apart from such *introductory* formulas, there are phrases *referring* to God speaking such as “God had said to X,” “the Lord had commanded Moses,” “at the command of the Lord,” “this is the command the Lord has given.” The term I use to indicate both the introductory and the referring formulas is *divine speech formulas*.

What struck me in particular was the manner in which these formulas were distributed in the text of the Pentateuch in certain clusters or series. In Genesis, these concentrations occur in the creation narrative (Genesis 1), the story of Adam and

Eve (Genesis 3), the story of the flood (Genesis 6–9), and further on in Genesis chapters 15, 17, 18, 22, 31, and 35. In the book of Exodus, they are concentrated in chapters 3–4, 19, 30–31, 35, 39, and 40. And they appear in the books of Leviticus and Numbers as well. The fact that some narratives have very few or even no divine speeches at all can be explained in terms of the theological intention of the biblical authors. They could choose between using direct speech in connection with God introducing him as actively partaking in what is reported and speaking in the first person, or reporting God’s activity in the third person. This would explain the clusters or concentrations of divine speeches in certain parts of the texts, but not the particular way these clusters are structured. I discovered distinct patterns, which were frequently regulated by the structural numbers 7 and 11.

### **Series of Seven in the Tabernacle Laws**

We have known for a long time that the story of the fabrication of the desert sanctuary in Exodus 25–40 is in two distinct sections: chapters 25–31 and 35–40, interrupted by the story of the golden calf that was made by the Israelites at Mount Sinai in 32–34. A closer examination of the divine speeches in the first section, 25–31, revealed the fact that there was a significant difference in the length of the speeches.

The first speech, introduced by the formula “The Lord spoke to Moses” in 25:1, comprises the whole of 25:1 – 30:10, dealing with detailed instructions for the fabrication of the Tabernacle and its equipment. It is followed by six much shorter speeches in 30:11 – 31:17, introduced by the same stereotyped formula. Here each speech deals with one single subject. This means that there are exactly 7 divine speeches in the first section of the Tabernacle laws, Exodus 25–31.

In light of this observation, I made two conclusions. In the first place, the choice of having exactly seven speeches rests on a deliberate decision. And second, the series of seven

divine speeches gives structure to the Tabernacle laws in this section and makes it into a literary unit. This insight opened my eyes to see the structuring and unifying function of this number. What I did not realize at that stage was that I would subsequently discover many more instances of this phenomenon in the Pentateuch.

Let us survey the seven divine speeches in Exodus 25–31.

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|--|-----------------|
| 1. The Lord spoke to Moses: (diverse commands)         | 25:1 – 30:10    |
| 2. The Lord spoke to Moses: (money for expiation)      | 30:11–16        |
| 3. The Lord spoke to Moses: (the bronze basin)         | 30:17–21        |
| <b>4. The Lord spoke to Moses: (the anointing oil)</b> | <b>30:22–33</b> |
| 5. The Lord spoke to Moses: (the holy spices)          | 30:34–38        |
| 6. The Lord spoke to Moses: (the craftsmen)            | 31:1–11         |
| 7. The Lord spoke to Moses: (the Sabbath)              | 31:12–17        |

What is significant here, in the first place, is the fact that the instruction for the preparation of *the holy oil-mixture* for the anointing of the Tabernacle, its equipment and the Aaronic priests, stands in the center of the series. It is not surprising to find the instruction pertaining to this extremely holy item in the center of the seven speeches, a position in which it receives special emphasis. What is more significant is that the seventh instruction deals with the keeping of the Sabbath, the seventh day of the week. This cannot be a matter of coincidence, as I would prove later when I had studied the divine speeches in Leviticus. There I discovered more instances of the link between the seventh divine speech and the Sabbath, as I shall demonstrate below.

There must be an intimate connection between the use of the number 7 to structure the divine speeches and the Sabbath. What is more, there appears to be a clear analogy between the work entrusted to Moses with regard to the Tabernacle and God's work in creating of the world. This analogy is corroborated in Exod 39:43; for after the work of the Tabernacle was completed, "Moses inspected all the work and saw that they had carried it out according to the command of the Lord, and he blessed them." God's seventh act at the time of the creation of the world was to cease work and to rest; whereas Moses'

seventh assignment at the time of the fabrication of the Tabernacle is to see to the keeping of the Sabbath. As a matter of fact, the link between the keeping of the Sabbath and God's ceasing work and resting on the seventh day is explicitly stressed in the seventh divine speech: ". . . on the seventh day he ceased work and refreshed himself" (Exod 31:17).<sup>2</sup>

A closer look at the so-called second Sinai passage in Exodus 32–34, the story of Israel's apostasy, revealed that there are 13 divine speech formulas altogether introducing God's communication with Moses.<sup>3</sup> In the remaining chapters 35–40 there is only one introductory formula (in 40:1), bringing the total number of introductory formulas in chapters 32–40 to exactly 14 ( $2 \times 7$ ). Here again the number 7 is used to give structure and unity to the material: the series of 7 divine speech formulas in 25–31 and the series of 14 in 32–40 link the various literary units in the text of 25–40 together to form a larger unity.

My investigation of the formulas in the second section of the Tabernacle laws, the story of the carrying out of God's instructions by Moses and his assistants in Exodus 35–40, brought to light the fact that the number 7 regulates the references to God's commands given in Exod 25–31. In the story of the carrying out of God's instructions in Exod 35–38, there are 7 references to what God had earlier commanded Moses. They are not stereotyped, but phrased in various ways:

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|---|--------------|
| 1. These are the Lord's commands to you             | 35:1         |
| 2. This is a thing the Lord commanded               | 35:4         |
| 3. Everything the Lord commanded                    | 35:10        |
| <b>4. The work the Lord commanded through Moses</b> | <b>35:29</b> |
| 5. Exactly as the Lord commanded                    | 36:1         |
| 6. The work the Lord commanded                      | 36:5         |
| 7. Everything the Lord commanded Moses              | 38:22        |

The function of the number 7 symbolically representing the idea of "fullness" and "completeness" is clearly to underscore what is said in the text that *all* the tasks were executed *completely* in accordance with the instructions given by God to Moses. It should not escape our notice that, whereas the

seventh and last divine speech in 31:12–17 deals with the keeping of the Sabbath, the passage in 35:1–3 *begins* with the Sabbath in the very first words of Moses' first address to the Israelites. Another significant feature is the special emphasis on the offerings brought by the people of Israel to the Lord for all the work of the Tabernacle: the fourth reference in 35:29 has pride of place in the center of the series.

The passage dealing with the making of the sacred vestments in 39:1–31, contains another series of 7 stereotyped formulas, with the command regarding the breastpiece in center position:

1. as the Lord commanded Moses (vestments)	39:1
2. as the Lord commanded Moses (ephod)	39:5
3. as the Lord commanded Moses (cornelians)	39:7
<b>4. as the Lord commanded Moses (breastpiece)</b>	<b>39:21</b>
5. as the Lord commanded Moses (ephod-mantle)	39:26
6. as the Lord commanded Moses (tunics)	39:29
7. as the Lord commanded Moses (medallion)	39:31

The following passage in Exod 39:32–43 tells how the Tabernacle with all its equipment was presented to Moses, who inspected all the work and *saw* that the craftsmen had done their work according to the command of the Lord, and he *blessed* them (verse 43). This is a clear allusion to what is said in Genesis: having performed his last act of creation, “God *saw* all he had made, and it was very good” (Gen 1:31), and in 2:3 that God rested on the seventh day, and *blessed* the day and made it holy. The analogy between Moses' *seeing* what he had accomplished and his *blessing*, on the one hand, and God's *seeing* what he had accomplished and his *blessing*, on the other, is unmistakable.

The passage in Exod 39:32–43 contains three formulas referring to God's commands. In comparison with the preceding series of seven stereotyped formulas, these three are phrased differently so as to keep the previous series of seven intact.

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|---|-------|
| 1. exactly as the Lord commanded Moses (all work) | 39:32 |
| 2. exactly as the Lord commanded Moses (all work) | 39:42 |
| 3. as the Lord commanded (all work)               | 39:43 |

The three references bring the total number of referring formulas to ten. It cannot escape our notice that this number corresponds to the number of divine utterances in Genesis 1, which we examine in greater detail below.<sup>4</sup>

The structure of the ten divine utterances introduced by the stereotyped formula “God said” in the Creation narrative was used by the author of the Tabernacle passage as a model to give structure to the material in Exodus 39. What we have here is yet another allusion to the analogy between the work done by Moses in regards the Tabernacle, and God’s activities in creating the world. Just as God spoke ten times in getting the world and life on earth going, so Moses is said ten times to have obediently carried out God’s instructions to get the Tabernacle ready and to initiate the temple-cult.<sup>5</sup>

This shows once again that there is a close relationship between the form of the text—including its numerical aspects—and its contents, a principle we shall illustrate later.

Let us conclude our investigation into the divine speeches in the Tabernacle laws by examining Exod 40:1–16, which includes the last of the divine speeches in Exodus where Moses is commanded to set up the Tabernacle. It is introduced by the formula “The Lord spoke to Moses,” and concluded with the remark “Moses did everything exactly as the Lord had commanded him” (verse 16). The execution of God’s commands by Moses is described in the next 17 verses (17–33), where 7 stereotyped formulas are used to underline *sevenfold* what has been said in verse 16:<sup>6</sup>

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|---|--------------|
| 1. as the Lord commanded him (the Tabernacle)       | 40:19        |
| 2. as the Lord commanded him (the ark)              | 40:21        |
| 3. as the Lord commanded him (the table)            | 40:23        |
| <b>4. as the Lord commanded him (the lampstand)</b> | <b>40:25</b> |
| 5. as the Lord commanded him (the gold altar)       | 40:27        |
| 6. as the Lord commanded him (the screen)           | 40:29        |
| 7. as the Lord commanded him (the basin)            | 40:32        |

The setting up of the lampstand with its lamps occupies center position in this series of seven acts performed by Moses. The fact that its center position coincides with the fourth place in the series—which is of course a matter of contingency—reminds us of the creation of the heavenly lamps—the sun, the moon, and the stars, on the fourth day in Genesis 1. In light of various covert references to the creation narrative we have already encountered in the Tabernacle laws, our author apparently had this in mind and used it as an additional reason for putting the erection of the lampstand at this particular point in the series. The main reason, however, was to give this act pride of place in the center of the pattern of seven items.

This widely used pattern derives from the shape of the menorah, the six-branched lampstand, whose form in turn originated from the stylized tree of life, having a central stem and six branches—three on each side. The traditional term “seven-branched lampstand” is thus incorrect and should be replaced by “six-branched lampstand.” The menorah is the archetype for literary compositions in which this pattern was used as a structuring device. Therefore the terms “menorah-model” and “menorah-pattern,” introduced by the Austrian orientalist Claus Schedl to indicate this particular compositional pattern, are indeed appropriate.<sup>7</sup>

The special emphasis on the setting up of the lampstand and its lamps in the passage under discussion can only be interpreted to mean that it was regarded as having a unique significance: the installation of the symbols par excellence representing the presence of God in the sanctuary. Recent studies on the menorah have shed new light not only on its form, origin and function, but also on its symbolic significance of denoting the Presence.<sup>8</sup>

What is striking in our passage is the use of the phrase “for the benefit of the Lord” with regard to two specific items: the bread of the Presence (verse 23), and the lamps of the menorah (verse 25).<sup>9</sup> Both the bread of Presence and the lamps symbolically represent the Presence of God in the sanctuary. This con-

clusion is corroborated by the clear connection between the menorah and the traditions about the burning bush, the *kabod* (glory) of the Lord that filled the Tabernacle, the pillar of cloud and the pillar of fire that guided the Israelites in the desert, all of them symbolizing the Presence of the Lord.

In light of the symbolic function of the menorah in the temple, we may assume that when the biblical writers structured their texts in a menorah-pattern, they imbued them at the same time with the symbolic significance of the menorah. In other words, the menorah-patterns in the biblical text could also be meant to signify God's presence in the text. We shall discuss this in more detail in the next chapter, in connection with the divine name numbers 17 and 26 which were "woven" into the fabric of the text to "seal" it, so to speak, with God's name, which signifies his presence.

### **The Significance of the Menorah In Center Position**

Let us return to the menorah texts in the book of Exodus to illustrate the significance of the center position of the menorah. In Exod 30:26–28, God's command to Moses to anoint the holy objects and their outfit, we count 7 items, with the menorah at the center:

1. the Tent of Meeting,
2. the Ark of the Testimony,
3. the Table and all its vessels,
- 4. the Lampstand and its fittings,**
5. the Altar of Incense,
6. the Altar of Whole-offering and all its vessels,
7. the Basin and its stand.

Significantly enough this passage occurs in the fourth divine speech (30:22–33) in the center of the first series of seven divine speeches in the Tabernacle laws we have studied above. What we have here is a text with a reference to the menorah in center position right in the middle of a larger text.<sup>10</sup>



The author of Zechariah 1–8, who was responsible for the redaction of the visions of the prophet, must have been familiar with the structure of these menorah texts. It simply cannot be a matter of coincidence that the fourth vision—that of the menorah with its lamps and the olive trees in 4:1–14—occupies center position in the semi-symmetric pattern in which the 7 visions are arranged.<sup>11</sup> (The texts between brackets give the chapter division we find in most translations, which is sometimes different from that in the Hebrew Bible. )

1. The horsemen and the horses	1:1–17
2. The four horns and the four smiths	2:1–4 (1:18–21)
3. The man with a measuring line	2:5ff. (2:1ff.)
<b>4. The menorah with lamps and olive trees</b>	<b>4:1–14</b>
5. The flying scroll	5:1–4
6. The barrel for measuring	5:5–11
7. The four chariots and their horses	6:1–8

It is worth noting that the first and last visions correspond—in the sense that both are about horses—and so form a symmetrical pattern. Another observation we can make is that the words spoken by the angel in verse 4:10b (4:4 in the Revised English Bible), which are extremely difficult to interpret, can be understood as alluding to the presence of God. The sentence, “These seven are the eyes of the Lord which range over the whole earth” can be taken as referring primarily to the stone “with seven facets” (3:9), but they can also be understood as pointing to the menorah’s “seven lamps and the seven lips on each of the lamps” (4:2). In the latter case the seven lamps could be viewed as symbolically representing the seven eyes of the Lord, and, of course, the seven eyes denote God’s omnipresence.

### **Series of Seven in the Book of Leviticus And the Sabbath**

My study of the divine speeches in the book of Leviticus brought to light the same predilection for the use of the number seven to

give structure to the laws that we found in the Tabernacle laws in Exodus. However, there is a significant difference between the two sets of laws. Whereas *all* instructions given to Moses regarding the building of the Tabernacle are phrased as divine speeches directed to Moses—by the use of the first person singular for God and the second person for Moses—the laws in Leviticus are characterized by the profuse use of the third person singular form in the divine speeches. Not all individual laws are introduced by separate divine speech formulas, as is the case in Exod 30:11–31:17. Some are introduced by the matter-of-fact phrase “This is the law of . . .” (see, for instance, 6:14; 7:1 and 11). This shows that the technique used in Leviticus, like that of Exodus, is to create a series of seven.

The first series of seven occurs in the sacrificial laws in Leviticus 1–6, where we find, apart from the first introductory phrase (1:1) “The Lord summoned Moses and spoke to him from the Tent of Meeting,” 6 stereotyped formulas phrased “The Lord spoke to Moses.” The series of seven is followed by three speeches in chapters 7–8 introduced by the same stereotyped formula. The next divine speech occurs in 10:8–11, introduced by the formula “The Lord spoke to Aaron.” The narrative in 10:12–20 concludes the collection of laws in the series of eleven divine speeches in chapters 1–10, the first unmistakable instance in Leviticus of the use of the typical  $7+3+1=11$  (or  $7+4=11$ ) pattern.

- |     |   |                   |
|-----|---|-------------------|
| 1.  | And the Lord spoke to Moses, saying         | 1:1               |
| 2.  | And the Lord spoke to Moses, saying         | 4:1               |
| 3.  | And the Lord spoke to Moses, saying         | 5:14              |
| 4.  | <b>And the Lord spoke to Moses, saying</b>  | <b>5:20 (6:1)</b> |
| 5.  | And the Lord spoke to Moses, saying         | 6:1 (6:8)         |
| 6.  | And the Lord spoke to Moses, saying         | 6:12 (6:19)       |
| 7.  | And the Lord spoke to Moses, saying         | 6:17 (6:24)       |
| 8.  | And the Lord spoke to Moses, saying         | 7:22              |
| 9.  | And the Lord spoke to Moses, saying         | 7:28              |
| 10. | And the Lord spoke to Moses, saying         | 8:1               |
| 11. | And the Lord spoke to <i>Aaron</i> , saying | 10:8              |

Before I survey the remaining divine speech formulas in Leviticus, I would draw attention to the series of seven stereotyped formulas referring to the Lord's commands to Moses in chapter 8 (reminding us of the series of seven in Exodus 39–40!).<sup>12</sup>

1) as the Lord commanded him	8:3
2) as the Lord commanded Moses	8:9
3) as the Lord commanded Moses	8:13
<b>4) as the Lord commanded Moses</b>	<b>8:17</b>
5) as the Lord commanded Moses	8:21
6) as the Lord commanded Moses	8:29
7) everything that the Lord commanded through Moses	8:36

These seven instances are followed by three differently phrased formulas in Leviticus 9–10.

1) as the Lord commanded	9:7
2) as the Lord commanded Moses	9:10
3) as the Lord commanded.	10:15

These referring formulas seem to form a  $7+3=10$  pattern. However, if we regard the formula in 16:34 as belonging to this series, we have the  $7+4=11$  pattern. Whether this is so is a matter for further study.

In Leviticus 11–16 (the purification laws) we find another series of seven stereotyped introductory formulas, “The Lord spoke to Moses (and Aaron), four of which include the name of Aaron:

1) 11:1 (+ Aaron)	2) 12:1;	3) 13:1 (+ Aaron)	4) 14:1;
5) 14:33 (+ Aaron)	6) 15:1 (+ Aaron)	7) 16:1.	

An additional formula, occurring in 16:2, is phrased differently: “The Lord said to Moses,” in order not to disturb the series of seven, a technique we have encountered above, and which we shall confront again.

The so-called Holiness Code in Leviticus 17–26 seems to have two series of seven stereotyped introductory formulas, phrased “The Lord spoke to Moses.” This view of the series depends on the supposition that the two divine speeches in chapters 17–18 should be regarded as an introduction to the

collection of laws in 19–26, where the term “Be holy, for I, the Lord your God, am holy” occurs for the first time in chapter 19. The eighth formula (in 21:1) is phrased “The Lord said to Moses,” once again, as we have seen, to keep the series of seven stereotyped formulas in Lev 19–23 intact.<sup>13</sup>

1) The Lord spoke to Moses	19:1
2) The Lord spoke to Moses	20:1
3) The Lord spoke to Moses	21:16
<b>4) The Lord spoke to Moses</b>	<b>22:1</b>
5) The Lord spoke to Moses	22:17
6) The Lord spoke to Moses	22:26
7) The Lord said to Moses	23:1

This series is concluded in 23:8 by an instruction with regard to “the seventh day,” which brings to mind what we have seen in the first series of 7 divine speeches in the Tabernacle laws, where the concluding speech deals with the Sabbath (Exod 31:12–17).

The introductory formulas to the divine speeches in the second series of 7 in the Holiness laws are formulated in the same stereotyped manner, except that the seventh is longer: “The Lord spoke to Moses on Mount Sinai.”

1) The Lord spoke to Moses	23:9
2) The Lord spoke to Moses	23:23
3) The Lord spoke to Moses	23:26
<b>4) The Lord spoke to Moses</b>	<b>23:33</b>
5) The Lord spoke to Moses	24:1
6) The Lord spoke to Moses	24:13
7) The Lord spoke to Moses on Mount Sinai	25:1

The divine speech at the center of the series is about the 7-day Feast of Booths in the seventh month. The seventh speech deals mainly with the Sabbath Years and the Year of Jubilee, the quintessence of the Sabbath!

The first results of my investigation into the use of divine speech formulas in the Old Testament supplied the definitive proof in my mind that the number seven played an important role as a structuring device in the two large so-called priestly

passages in the books of Exodus and Leviticus. Some of the results of my investigation were published in 1978.<sup>14</sup>

I was convinced not only that I had detected a significant aspect of the biblical text, but also that there must be more to be discovered regarding the use of the divine speech formulas in the Pentateuch. This supposition was shown to be true in further research on the subject. From the start, the phenomenon intrigued me and aroused my curiosity. In my leisure time, I began to mark the introductory and referring formulas in the Pentateuch with highlighters of different colors to make them visible. What I gradually found made me realize that the use of these formulas, which had not been studied systematically before, needed to be investigated more thoroughly.

### **More Examples of Manifestly Designed Series of Seven Items**

The opportunity to explore the matter more deeply presented itself in the fall of 1981, when I sprained my ankle playing volleyball and had to take some rest. Making a virtue of the necessity, I sat at my desk to register the divine speech formulas in the Pentateuch. Much to my delight, I found that clusters or series of divine speech formulas were not limited to the so-called priestly passages. They occurred throughout the books of Genesis–Numbers, for instance:

- ▶ the cluster of ten stereotyped introductory formulas in Gen 1:3, 6, 9, 11, 14, 20, 24, 26, 28, 29 in the pattern  $7+3=10$ , to which we shall return below;
- ▶ the cluster of seven in Gen 3:9, 11, 13, 14, 16, 17, 22;
- ▶ the series of ten in 6–9 (6:3, 7, 13; 7:1, 15, 21; 9:1; 9:8, 12, 17) in a  $7+3=10$  pattern;
- ▶ the series of eleven in 31–32 (31:3, 11, 12, 24, 29; 32:10, 13, 27, 28, 29, 30)— $7+4=11$  pattern;
- ▶ the series of seven in 35–48 (35:1, 10, 11; 46:2a, 2b, 3; 48:4);
- ▶ the cluster of seven in Gen 15:1–16 (1, 4, 5a, 5b, 7, 9, 13);
- ▶ the cluster of seven in Exod 4:1–17 (2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 11, 14).

A closer examination of the two latter instances showed the unmistakable aim of the author to achieve exactly seven introductory formulas.

In Gen 15:1–16, the conversation between God and Abram, there appears to be a formula (in 5b) that does not seem to be strictly necessary, since it occurs directly after the preceding divine speech in verse 5a. The text is structured as follows:

1. The *word of the Lord* came to Abram (verse 1); and Abram's response (verses 2–3);
2. The *word of the Lord* came to him (verse 4);
3. He brought Abram outside and *said* (verse 5a);
4. ***Then He said to him (verse 5b),<sup>15</sup> and Abram's response (verse 6);***
5. And He *said* to him (verse 7); and Abram's response (verse 8);
6. And He *said* to him (verse 9); and Abram's response (verses 10–12);
7. And He *said* to Abram (verse 13).

In the next passage, Gen 15:17–21, the author used a different formula (verse 18) to introduce God's covenant with Abram, in order not to disturb this manifestly designed seven instances of introductory formulas. Instead of using the finite verb, he chose the infinitive form: "That day the Lord made a covenant with Abram, saying."<sup>16</sup>

The extra divine speech formula does not disturb the even course of the text when we read it, because it has a clear function in the context: to give Abram the time to look at the stars before God resumes and speaks about Abram's descendants. This observation confirms what we have noticed already: the ingenious way in which the text has been composed so that the numerical aspects do not upset the smooth course of the narrative.

Let us now examine the second passage, Exod 4:1–17—the narrative about God's instructing Moses to prepare him for his mission—as an example of a text with a cluster of seven formulas in which we miss obviously indispensable introductory formulas. Since the lacking of formulas in a text is more conspicuous than extra ones, an attentive reader will easily

locate the spots where we miss introductory formulas. The passage is structured as follows:

1. *The Lord said to him*: “What is that in your hand?” (2a);  
Moses’ response (2b);
2. *And He said*: “Cast it on the ground!” (3a);  
Moses’ reaction (3b);
3. *But the lord said to Moses*: “Put out your hand and take it by the tail!”—so he put out his hand and caught it and it became a rod in his hand—  
“that they may believe that the Lord, the God of their fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob has appeared to you.” (4–5);
4. *Then the Lord said to him*: “Put your hand into your bosom!” (6a);  
Moses obeys and his hand was leprous (6b);
5. *And He said*: “Put your hand back into your bosom!”—and when he took it out, behold, it was as healthy as the rest of his body—“If they will not believe you, or heed the first sign, they may believe the latter sign. If they will not believe even these two signs, or heed your voice, you shall take some water from the Nile and pour it upon the ground . . .” (7–9);  
Moses responds, stating his objections (10);
6. *Then the Lord said to him*: (God’s response: 11–12);  
Moses’ answer (13);
7. Then the Lord became angry with Moses *and he said*: (God commands Moses to go and accomplish his mission: 14–17).

In the third and the fifth divine speeches, the author interrupted God’s words with the narrative and let God continue to speak without using an introductory phrase—in verse 5 and verse 8, where we would expect a new introductory formula. Moreover, God’s instruction to Moses to perform a third

miracle is not introduced by a separate introductory phrase, but is incorporated in the fifth speech. All this illustrates the author's intention to obtain 7 introductory formulas.

In chapter 5 we shall have a still closer look at this brilliantly composed text which has a number of other fascinating numerical aspects, one of which is that the total number of (Hebrew) words used in the introductory formulas adds up to 17, the extremely holy number representing the name YHWH. The author's obvious intention to obtain this number explains the great variety in length of the introductory formulas: 1) 3 words; 2) 1 word; 3) 4 words; 4) 4 words; 5) 1 word; 6) 3 words; 7) 1 word.

Let us now examine a pattern we have already touched upon: the  $7+4=11$  pattern, a structuring principle of which I have discovered numerous instances particularly in Genesis and in Deuteronomy.