

FORTY, (THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE NUMBER)

There are many significant instances in the scriptures where the number 40 is used, the following are some examples of these thematic connections:

1Kgs. 2:11a says, "He (David) had reigned forty years over Israel..."

1Kgs. 11:42 says, "Solomon reigned in Jerusalem over all Israel forty years."

2Sam. 5:4 "David was thirty years old when he became king, {and} he reigned forty years."

Deut. 10:10 "I, moreover, stayed on the mountain forty days and forty nights like the first time, and Adonai listened to me that time also; Adonai was not willing to destroy you."

Deut. 25:2-3 says, "then, if the wicked one deserves to be flogged, the judge is to have him lie down and be flogged in his presence. The number of strokes is to be proportionate to his offence, but the maximum number is forty..." It is believed that Messiah received the "forty lashes minus one." Five times Paul received the "forty lashes minus one" from the Jews (2Cor. 11:24). The 40 lashes was the maximum punishment a person could receive. The 40 lashes were reserved for the worst of offenders. Messiah received the maximum punishment for our sins. The Orthodox Jews had a law stating no man could be lashed more than thirty nine times.

Exod. 24:18 says, "Moses entered the cloud and went up on the mountain; he was on the mountain forty days and forty nights."



Exod. 34:28 also says, "Moses was there with YHWH forty days and forty nights, during which time he neither ate food or drank water..." What is the significance of Moses being on Mt. Sinai for 40 days and 40 nights without food and water?

Gen. 6:3 says, "...therefore their life span is to be 120 years." 120 is divisible by the number 40 three times. Later we will see this 40 x 3 principle in the life of Moses.

Gen. 7:12 says, "It rained on the earth forty days and forty nights." What is the significance of the "40 days and 40 nights" of rain? The number "40" often represents a generation. Yah's rain judgement against that wicked generation lasted for "40 days and 40 nights." Let's look at another forty.

Josh. 14:7 says, "I (Joshua) was forty years old when Moses the servant of Yah sent me from Kadesh Barnea to explore the land, and I brought back to him an honest report."

Jgs. 3:11 says, "So the land had rest for forty years, until Othniel son of Kenaz died." Israel had forty years of peace when Deborah ruled (Judg. 5:31). The book of Judges has three sets of forty.

Jgs. 8:28b says, "...During Gideon's lifetime, the land enjoyed peace for forty years."

Jgs. 13:1 says, "Again the Israelites did evil in the eyes of the Yahveh, so that Yahveh delivered them into the hands of the Philistines for forty years."

Matt. 4:1-2 says, "Then the Spirit led Yeshua up into the wilderness to be tempted by the Adversary. After Yeshua had fasted forty days and nights, he was hungry." Messiah's 40 days and nights without food parallels to Moses' 40 days and nights without food. Lets look at another significant forty.

Num. 13:25 says, "Forty days later, they returned from exploring the land." Do you remember the story? Moses sent 12 spies into the Promised Land. They returned after forty days and gave their report. 10 of the 12 spies gave a bad report and only Joshua and Kaleb encouraged the people to go up to the land. The people refused to listen to Joshua and Kaleb and rebelled against Yah and did not enter the land. This was there punishment for sinning against Yah.

Num. 14:32-34 says, "But you, your carcasses will fall in this desert; and your children will wander about in the desert for forty years. It will be a year for every day you spent exploring the land that you will bear the

consequences of your offences, forty days, forty years." The forty years Israel wandered in the wilderness correlates to the forty days they explored the land and then refused to go into the land. Here is a little side-note-trivia-fact for you. How old was Joshua when he and the others explored the land? Yes, he was forty years old.

The last leader of Israel, before King Saul, was the prophet Samuel. Guess how long Samuel ruled Israel? **1Sam. 4:18b** says, "...He (Samuel) *led Israel for forty years.*" Guess how long King David reigned? **1Kgs. 2:11a** says, "*He (David) had reigned forty years over Israel...*" Guess how long King Solomon reigned? **1Kgs. 11:42** says, "*Solomon reigned in Jerusalem over all Israel forty years.*" Like father like son. David was 30 years old when he began to reign (2Sam. 5:4) and Messiah was also 30 years old when He started His ministry.

In the Hebrew alphabet every letter represents a number. The letter "MEM" means "forty". The letter mem is the thirteenth letter of the alef-beis. There are two forms of the mem: the open mem and the closed mem. As the Talmud explains, the open mem represents the revealed Torah and the closed mem represents the Torah's secrets.

According to Jewish faith, one undergoes immersion if there is any question of ritual impurity. This can result from a number of causes, some a requirement of the natural course of life, e.g., after giving birth. Luke's Gospel speaks concerning the period of Mirium's "purification" (Luke 2:22). This was the forty days following the birth of Yeshua (Lev. 12:2-4). It is only after this period that she was permitted to enter the Temple. Before entering the Temple area Mary would have been required to submit to ritual immersion, perhaps even in one of the ritual baths (mikvah) archaeologists have uncovered along the southern wall of the Temple Mount. Dr. Chana Safrai has noted that Mary went to the Temple to give her offering on the first day she was permitted. Since she was not obligated to go that very first day, this may be another indication of the deep religious piety of Mary and Joseph, hinting at the type of home in which Yeshua was raised.

I would like to show you an interesting parallel between an event in David's life and a future Messianic event. Matt. 24:32-35 talks about a spiritual lesson from the fig tree. The fig tree represents Israel (see also Matt. 21:18-19). Messiah says that "*this generation*" will not pass away until all this (Matt. 24:3-31) happens. How long is "one generation?" I have already mentioned that forty years can represent "one generation." When the fig tree (Israel) gets leaves and its twigs get tender, then there will be one generation (forty years) till Messiah returns. Some believers think we are living in that last generation. If that is the case, then what point in time did the fig tree (Israel) get leaves and tender twigs? Some people say that because Israel became a nation in 1948, that Messiah would return in 1988. There was even a book called "88 Reasons Why Christ is Coming Back in 1988." I personally do not think you can begin counting down 40 years (one generation) from the year 1948. The fig tree (Israel) was only just sprouting out of the ground in 1948. The fig tree (Israel) did not really develop as a nation until after the six day war in 1967. It was in 1967 that Israel captured and regained control of Jerusalem.

There has been about 6,000 years from the time of Adam until now. Some believe that the 7th millennium could be the 1,000 year reign of Messiah. If we count one generation (40 years) from 1967 then we come to 2007.

There is an interesting parallel between the 40 year "one generation" and the story of David and Goliath. **1Sam. 17:16** says, "*For forty days the Philistine (Goliath) came forward every morning and evening took his stand.*" Then David shows up, defeats Goliath and routes the enemies of Israel.

I would like to share a few more significant 40's with you:

Acts 1:3 says "*To these He presented Himself alive, after His suffering, by many convincing proofs, appearing to them over a period of forty days, and speaking of the things concerning the kingdom of Yahveh*". Messiah remained on the earth for forty days after His resurrection and then He ascended into heaven (Acts 1:9). **Acts 1:9** "*And after He had said these things, He was lifted up while they were looking on, and a cloud received Him out of their sight.*" Messiah ascended after 40 days.

From Elul 1 (sixth month on the sacred Hebrew calendar) till the Day of Atonement (Tishri 10) is exactly 40 days. The Day of Atonement stands as a day of judgement and the 40 days prior (Elul 1 - Tishri 10) is a special time of repentance. It is believed that the flood waters of Noah began on the Day of Atonement (Tishri 10).

Let's quickly review some other significant connections to 40.

- 40 number of years the Jews were in the dessert
- 40 number of days it rained at the time of the flood
- 40 number of days Moses's spies went into Canaan (Num 13)
- 40 number of years peace in the land (Jgs. 5:31)
- 40 number of days of mourning after Jacob's death (Gen. 50:3)
- 40 number of days till Nineveh was overthrown (Jonah 3:4)
- 40 the number represented by the hebrew letter "Mem"
- 40 Isaac was 40 when he married Rebekah (Gen. 25:20)

- 40 Esau was 40 when he married Judith (Gen. 26:34)

There are many numerical types in Scripture. The number seven is the number of completion. The number ten is a number of judgement. Fifty is also the year of jubilee. Biblical numerology (gematria) is the study of the significance of various numbers in Scripture. The number forty has, as we have seen, multiple meanings.

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