

Revelation Study: October and November, 2022

NOTE: You only need to read the Book of Revelation according to the Reading Schedule below. Here is a link to a free online resource for reading Revelation: [Book of Revelation](#). (If you are reading this document on paper, visit www.BibleGateway.com and search for Revelation, NRSVUE version, using the website's search function.)

Session 1. **Week of October 3:** Read Chapter 1 and the notes on Judaism and Numbers, below.

Session 2. **Week of October 10:** Read Chapters 2 & 3.

Session 3. **Week of October 17:** Read Chapters 4–8:1.

Session 4. **Week of October 24:** Read Chapters 8:2–11.

Session 5. **Week of October 31:** Read Chapters 12–14.

Session 6. **Week of November 7:** Read Chapters 15–18.

Session 7. **Week of November 14:** Read Chapters 19–22.

Judaism and Numbers

There were no *numerals* in Hebrew, only *names* for numbers. For example, the name for number one is *echad*. Just like we the name for numeral 1 as *one*. Because they did not have a set of numerals, they would use a shorthand borrowing the 22 letters of the Hebrew alphabet and accenting them with a tic mark. For example, if we can imagine the English alphabet being used the same way, then $A' = 1$, $B' = 2$, $C' = 3$, and so on.

However, in Hebrew, the first 9 letters correspond to numbers 1-9. The 10th through 19th letters increase by tens, from 10 to 100. The remaining 3 letters go up by hundreds (200, 300, 400).

Because some of the letters can be altered to take a new form, Jewish numerology includes 5 more “final” numbers that continue counting by 100 from where the 22nd letter leaves off. So, those final letters are 500, 600, 700, 800, and 900

Here's more information from an article on My Jewish Learning by Rabbi Geoffrey Dennis, with my additional notations from the book *Revelation for Progressive Christians* in brackets:

The practice of *gematria*, or the spiritual interpretation of numbers, is one technique for understanding sacred texts.

The following numbers are considered symbolic and/or sacred in Judaism:

One

One indicates unity, divinity, and wholeness, as exemplified by God.

Three

Three signifies completeness and stability, as represented by the three Patriarchs and the three pilgrimage festivals—Passover, Shavuot, and Sukkot (I Kings 17:21; Daniel 6:10). [Its significance carried over into Christianity, where it can be seen in the doctrine of the Trinity.]

3+1

This is a number cluster that signals the fulfillment of God's plans (Amos 1; Daniel 7:25).

Four

Four is a recurrent number in both exoteric and esoteric Jewish traditions. The Passover Seder is particularly structured around fours: the Four Questions, the Four Sons, and four cups of wine. There are four cardinal directions and there are four Matriarchs. Four is also a common factor in esoteric interpretations: four angels surround the Throne of Glory, there are four kingdoms of the eschaton, and the famous four Sages who enter Paradise.

Five

There are five books of Moses and five divisions to the Psalms. Magical/mystical texts are also sometimes separated into divisions of five. Five is the number of protection, as symbolized in the *hamsa*, the talismanic hand.

[Six]

[One less than seven—another way for saying “imperfect” or “not quite there” or even “perfect failure.”]

Seven

Seven is one of the greatest power numbers in Judaism, representing Creation, good fortune, and blessing. A Hebrew word for luck, *gad*, equals seven in gematria. Another Hebrew word for luck, *mazal*, equals 77.

The Bible is replete with things grouped in sevens. Besides the Creation and the exalted status of the Sabbath, the seventh day, there are seven laws of Noah and seven Patriarchs and Matriarchs. Several Jewish holidays are seven days long, and priestly ordination takes seven days. The Land of Israel was allowed to lie fallow one year in seven. The menorah in the Temple has seven branches. The prophet Zechariah describes a strange celestial stone with seven eyes (Chapter 4).

This emphasis on seven continues post-biblically with seven wedding blessings, seven circuits performed about a groom, and seven days of mourning after the death of a close relative.

Events, prayers, and esoteric observances that involve multiples of seven are also common. Entities both natural (gold) and supernatural (angels) are often grouped by sevens (I Enoch 20; II Enoch 19). Seven is a factor in many occult elements and events.

The first verse of the Torah consists of seven words and seven is the recurrent number in Pharaoh's divinatory dreams in Genesis. The walls of Jericho fall after the Israelites encircle it seven times. In the Zohar, the seven lower *sefirot* are those aspects of God that are present in *asiyah*, our world of action. Seven is also the preferred number in spells, magic squares, amulets, and the like (Genesis 7:2; I Kings 18:43; Deuteronomy 16:9; Pesachim 54a; Sotah 10b).

Eight

Eight is the number of completion. The Tabernacle was dedicated in an eight-day ceremony. Male children are circumcised on the eighth day (Genesis 17).

Hanukkah is an eight-day holiday.

Ten

Ten is a symbol of good luck and power: there are 10 commandments. God requires 10 righteous individuals in Sodom to avert divine punishment, and 10 men constitute a traditional *minyán*, a spiritual community (Genesis 18, 24:10; Exodus 26:1; Daniel 7:7-24).

Twelve

Twelve represents totality, wholeness, and the completion of God's purpose. There are 12 tribes of Israel (10 of which must be restored), 12 months in the year, and 12 houses of the zodiac (Genesis 27:20, 25:16; Exodus 24:4, 25:27; Ezekiel 43:16; Yoma 75b, 77b; Taanit 25a; Hullin 95).

Eighteen

Eighteen is the value of the Hebrew letters *chet* and *yod*, which together spell the word *chai*, life. For this reason, 18 is considered the luckiest number. God is mentioned 18 times in both Psalm 29 and the Song of the Sea (Exodus 15:1-21), giving these verses special protective power.

Twenty-four

The number 24 symbolizes abundance. At its prime, Jerusalem once had 24 dream interpreters you could consult, 24 main thoroughfares with 24 side streets leading to 24 alleys each containing 24 houses (Lamentations Rabbah I).

Thirty-two

According to *Sefer Yetzirah*, 32 is the number of the "wonderful ways of wisdom," the number of organizing principles that underlie the universe. These are the 22 letters of the Hebrew alphabet plus the decimal numbers that form the basis for the sefirotic tree.

Forty

[Can mean simply "a long time," but it is usually associated with some sort of radical transition or transformation.]

Forty appears many times in the Bible, usually designating a time of radical transition or transformation. Among the most famous examples are these: It rained for 40 days and 40 nights

during the Flood (Genesis 7). Exodus records that Moses spent 40 days on Mount Sinai with God. Forty is the number of years the Israelites were required to wander in the wilderness until they were allowed to enter Canaan. Corporeal punishment in the Torah involved 40 lashes. Elijah fasted for 40 days prior to receiving his revelation on Mount Horeb. Multiples of 40 are also common: 40,000 men rallied to Barak in the book of Judges.

The also reports wondrous phenomena occurring in units of 40. It also appears in mystical texts, usually as an element of purification. Thus the Book of the Great Name advises its readers to abstain from sleeping in one's own bed for 40 days and nights after using the book, mimicking the time Moses spent away from camp while he received the Ten Commandments (Genesis 7; Exodus 24; I Samuel 17:16; I Kings 19:8; Gittin 39b, 40a; Sotah 34a).

Seventy

This number symbolizes the world. There are 70 nations in the world, 70 languages, and 70 princely angels. The Greek translation of the Bible, the first to make it available to the gentile, was done by 70 Jewish scholars, who, though working separately, produced 70 identical translations.

[One Thousand]

[While this is a real number, for the Jews it primarily represented "a huge amount," or an infinite number. Thus, whenever we read "thousand" in the Bible, we need to be cautious. It is extremely doubtful that it ever refers to an actual "thousand."]

Odds and Evens

Finally, it is important to note that odd numbers are considered lucky; even numbers (especially pairs) are considered bad luck.

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